destroy all COMICS

#4

$3.95 US
$4.95 CAN

THIS ISSUE:
AN INTERVIEW WITH TOM HART

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The Introduction by Jeff LeVine

Well, here I am again, at the end of another issue. It's kind of weird that the end of an issue for me, means it's actually the start of one for you. As usual this introduction is the last thing I have to write and put together before sending all these pages off to the printer. This is probably the part of the magazine that's the most fun for me to do. The time when I can lay back on my bed, proud in the knowledge that I've actually managed to put another one of these things together is within my grasp.

As I write this it's eleven days until the end of 1995. This is the time of year when I can't help but think about the future, and my high hopes for it. I've got big plans for 1996, but I don't really feeling like talking about them right now. All I can say is I think it's going to be a pretty exciting year. Which is kinda weird considering how shitty things have been going lately, but I don't really want to talk about that either.

Once again, there's a fair amount of changes with this new issue of Destroy All Comics. The thing that's probably the most exciting to me is all the people who contributed columns. It's been my dream since the very first mini-issue (not quite even three years ago) to feature a lively group of columns written by the folks who are creating the future of comics...and with this issue I feel that my dream has come true. For lack of a better title (please write with your suggestions), I'm calling the section *Comics Comments*, and hope you'll find some writing of interest there. I know I did...although I have to admit that I certainly didn't agree with it all. Let me know what you think.

The main feature this issue is my long interview with Tom Hart. Special thanks to Tom for letting me print pages from his sketchbooks, plus several unpublished pages from upcoming projects.

Next issue's feature interview is with Drawn & Quarterly publisher Chris Oliveros, which should provide a whole new perspective to a lot of the ideas we've discussed in this magazine. I know that I, for one, am interested in learning how a publisher views this crazy industry. Did you know that besides probably being the most important comic book publisher of the 90's, that Chris Oliveros has also drawn comics?

Okay, I'm out of things to say. Write me with your views on this issue. What you say does make a difference. Also, please feel free to contribute...comics, articles, even interviews are welcome. Enclose a self-addressed stamped envelope if you desire a (somewhat) timely response to any submissions.

Thanks again,
Jeff Levine December 20th, 1995
Write me at: 1574 Hayes St, San Francisco, CA 94117

Contributor Notes:

Joe Chiappetta is the creator of *Silly Daddy* comics. Someday I hope to make a trip through Illinois just so I can have a drink with him.

Mary Fleener's brand new comic, *Fleener*, will be published by Zongo in May of 1996. She currently lives near the beach in Encinitas, California.

Dylan Williams has recently moved to Oakland, California, where he is working on a book-length graphic novel.

Eric Searleman is no doubt busy doing something or other. His comic, *Jazzbo*, will be missed, at least by me. He currently lives in Phoenix, Arizona.

Bobby Madness recently had a new comic published by Wow Cool called *Mad Soul*. It rains too much for me to live in Portland, Oregon, but that's where he currently resides.

Sirk Productions is a complete mystery to me.

Winsor McCay is best know for his long running newspaper comic, *Little Nemo in Slumberland*. I'm proud to reprint here a small selection of one of his lesser known strips, *A Pilgrim's Progress*. The strips in this issue originally ran in 1909. McCay died in 1934.

Aleksander Zograf currently resides in Serbia. Do yourself a favor (if you haven't already) and seek out his excellent comic, *Life Under Sanctions*, published by Fantagraphics about two years ago.

Keith Knight is the creator of the popular weekly newspaper strip, the *K Chronicles*. He has also collected many of his strips into little books. For the latest one send $2.00 to him at P.O. Box 591794, San Francisco, CA 94159.

Gabby Gamboa is currently busy putting together a second issue of her all-female anthology, *On Our Butts*, published by Aeon. Also look for a new (longer) strip by her in the second issue of *Top Shelf*.

T.E. Powers is a cartoonist I unfortunately don't know enough about. I believe he mostly did sports and editorial cartoons. The strips reprinted here are from the first decade of this century.

Tom Hart drew this issue's cover. For more information about him see the interview in this issue.

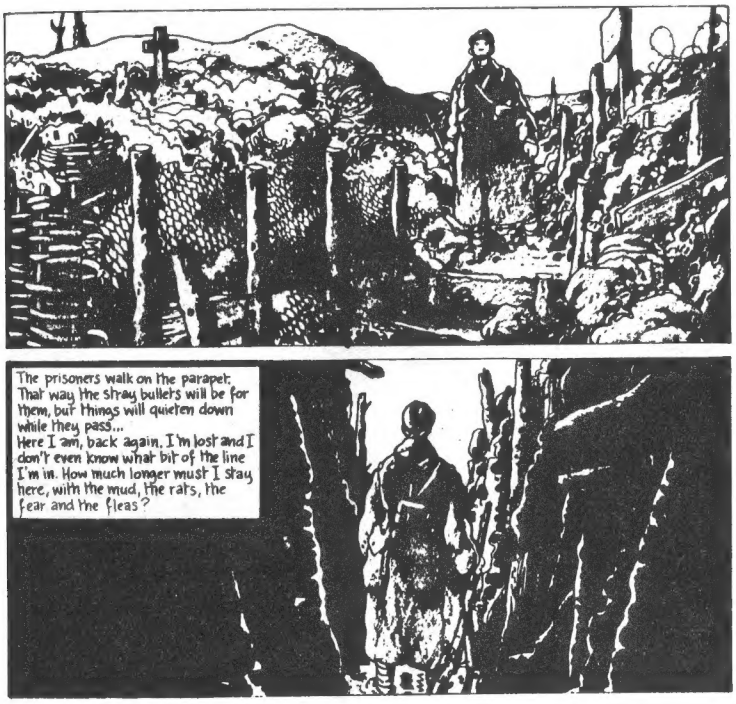
Jeff LeVine is looking forward to getting started on putting together the next issue of *Destroy All Comics* (due out in March). He's also working on several new comics projects that should start appearing in the summer of 1996 (including the tenth issue of *No Hope*).

Special thanks to Bill Blackbeard and the Academy of Comic Art for the McCay and Power's strips. Thanks also to Lisa Maslowe and Marilyn Rosenfeld for proof-reading above and beyond the call of duty.

DESTROY ALL COMICS #4 - January 1996 (Happy New Year). Published by Slave Labor Graphics...979 S. Bascom Ave., San Jose, CA 95128. **Destroy All Comics is ™ & © Jeff LeVine. Individual articles and comics are © their respective creators.** **For a FREEEE catalog of other Slave Labor merchandise and comics (including back issues of this magazine) call toll-free at 800-866-8929 or write 979 S. Bascom Ave., San Jose, CA 95128. Printed in Canada**

NEW COMICS

DRAWN AND QUARTERLY #3


The prisoners walk on the parapet. That way the stray bullets will be for them, but things will quieten down while they pass...
Here I am, back again. I'm lost and I don't even know what bit of the line I'm in. How much longer must I stay here, with the mud, the rats, the fear and the fleas?

It's always nice when a new issue of Drawn and Quarterly comes out, because it contains the guaranteed highest quality comics of all the currently published anthologies. The packaging is always beautiful, and all the contributing artists really seem to try their hardest.

This issue is no exception (although I didn't really care for J.D. King's rather garish cover). My favorite story of this batch is definitely *Bicycle Thief* by Pentti Otsamo, a cartoonist from Finland, who I'd definitely love to see more work by. Pentti's art is very beautiful...from his excellent sense of color, to the superb character design and layouts of each page and panel. Even though it's a relatively simple story that's only six pages long, it's very engaging and moving.

The other standout comic in this collection is yet another World War 1 tale from Jacques Tardi. His gripping black and white war stories (in issues one through three) have been devesting in their depictions of the horrors of war. In this story in particular, there's one panel that shows an assortment of people missing various limbs sitting in a room with the caption "56,000 amputees" that really got under my skin, the way an anti-war story needs to, to be effective. You read a story like this and just think that there are wars going on right now, and you just wonder, why the fuck haven't we learned our lesson.

In comparison, Maurice Vellekoop (whose comics I usually like) seemed kind of weak this time out, with his story *Side Door Lover*. Maurice's homosexual love story/true romance comic parody really didn't seem to fit in with any of the other stories in the book. Maybe it was just that this shrill story seemed kind of tired.

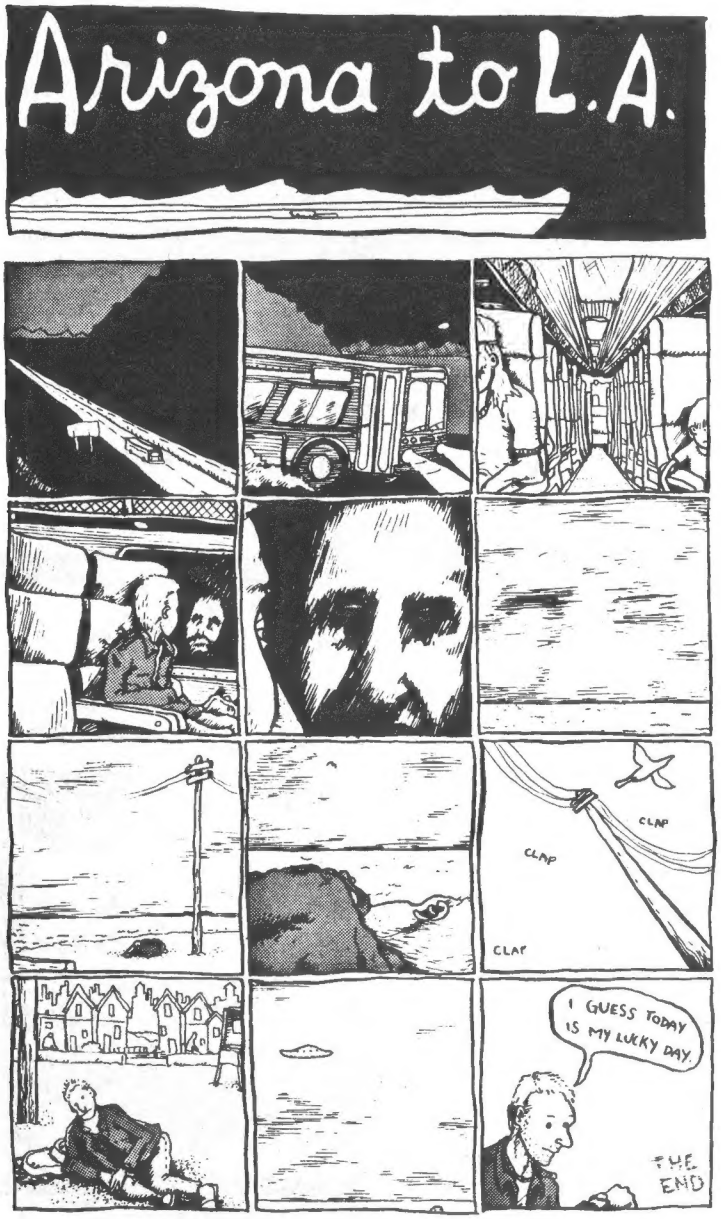
Finally, I liked *Johnny and Babe* by Graham Chaffee, but in the way that you like a story while you're reading it, but forget about it as soon as you're done. The art was nice...very competent, but just didn't really grab me...the way the art in a comic has to, if you really want to be pulled into the comic emotionally.

AS AIR TO WATER
by Chantale Elena Doyle

Chantale Doyle is carving out new ground with this exceptional and unique mini-comic. Mysterious words and pictures combin-

ing in new ways, more "art" than "comic." The production qualities are excellent (it's fancy), and I feel that this new book represents the work of a considerably more mature artist than the comics from Chantale's earlier series Misery and Vomit (which she ended a year or so ago). My only complaint would be the brevity of the comic, which is a two minute read at most. For a copy send $3.00 and an IRC to 472 Admirals Rd., Victoria B.C. V9A 2N1, Canada.

DRENCHED #4 by Rob Schulz



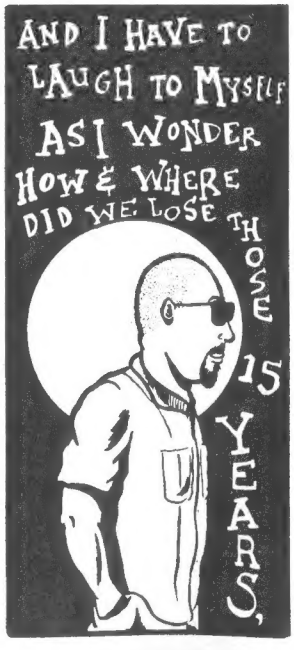
I found this to be a definitely better than average mini-comic. It's best feature is probably it's humorous/cartoony artwork. Rob has a good original art style which definitely helped me stay interested in the not particularly exciting stories. Yeah, the stories are Drenched's weak side. Mostly they seem pretty tossed off and improvisational, and they were mostly too short to have much of an impact. The comic I probably liked the best was an apparently autobiographical one about a good day he had, even though it reminded me a lot of some other autobiographical cartoonists comics about their good days...just like several other comics I've read Rob got excited buying some good comics, drew comics, got mail, and looked at the sky...I guess just the kind of comic I'm a sucker for. In another short comic I laughed out loud after reading a series of panels that say, "Nobody here...Gonna drink beer...Just one or two...A dozen also. Overall this comic reeks of potential talent that I hope Rob will eventually realize, by exercising more self-control and writing things that have a good reason to exist. For a copy send $2.00 to Rob Schulz/Drenched @ 2051 Makiki St., Honolulu, HI 96822, USA

SAKE JOCK by various

Sake Jock is a great new collection of comics put out by Fantagraphics featuring the work of seven different artists supposedly from today's Japanese comics underground. All the comics in this seventy-two page square bound collection are unique and excellent (some more than others). I hope we will get to see more work like this translated into English in the future. Some stories are hilarious, some are disgusting, some are moving, and some are just plain bizarre...I guess that's a good way to describe their art styles too. I highly urge you to seek out these comics for a special treat. My only complaint is that nine bucks seems kinda pricey.

NARCOLEPSY DREAMS #2 by Jaime Crespo

I felt kinda let down by the new issue of Narcolepsy Dreams. Most of it just wasn't very interesting, and the nine page "humorous" lecture on California's stupid proposition 187, wasn't very funny (all the jokes were too obvious), didn't say anything anybody with half a brain doesn't know already, and was just plain dull. The highlight of this issue for me was a four page autobiographical story about Jaime's experience with the big San Francisco earthquake in 1989, which was only mildly entertaining. There's also a few shorter and more arty comics that were pretty unmemorable. Okay, I guess I was pretty disappointed. Published by Slave Labor.



THE CATBOX ROOM #3
by Lisa Maslowe

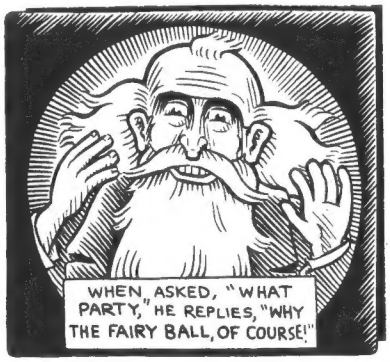
It's been quite a while since the last issue, but the wait has been worth it...this is the most charming mini-comic I've read in a very long time. This issue is considerably different than the first two issues, being almost entirely fiction, drawn in a considerably more detailed (sometimes a little too detailed) lush brush style, and with no stories about cats. What this issue does feature is several long, vaguely interconnecting stories, that focus mainly on the current lives, loves and experiences of several characters in their low twenties living in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and in the most entertaining segment, wandering through Europe. At the end of thirty-two pages, my only wish was that it wasn't over. Lisa is a great story teller, and hopefully we'll all be able to read many more comics by her in the future. For a copy send $2.00 to Lisa Maslowe @ P.O. Box 170143, San Francisco, CA 94117, USA

MUSE #5 by Paul Madonna

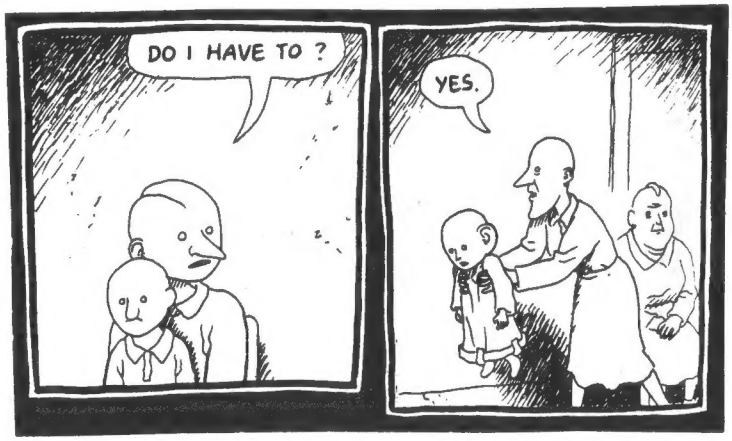
Muse #5 is the new skritchy hard to read comic by Paul Madonna, who I don't want to slander, but I can't help wondering if these obsessively detailed, sometimes practically indecipherable comics aren't drawn on speed. Reminds me a lot of bad 70's underground comics. Well, he obviously has something to get out, but I'm not sure what he's trying to say here, other than maybe, "Look, I can draw a comic." At the same time I have to admit, that at the very least it's unique, and that makes it better than most of the mini-comics that cross my path these days. To get a copy send $3.00 to Paul at 634 Lyon St., San Francisco, CA 94117, USA

ZERO ZERO Nov./Dec.
by various

This issue of Zero Zero probably features the best selection of artists yet, mostly because of the mere presence of new comics by Kim Deitch. After purchasing though, I felt gypped due to how many stories are ongoing stories. For instance, as much as I like Richard Sala's comics, it's never going to be exciting to read part five of a story if you haven't read the first four parts, and due to the generally boring looking contents of most of the previous issues of Zero Zero and expense, I haven't read and don't own most of the previous issues. Why would I want to read part three of Ted Stearn's Fuzz & Pluck if I hadn't read the first two parts? You might say, well just shut up and buy all the issues, but what if most of the previous issues looked dull? And who wants to wait two or three months to read the next eight or nine page installment of a comic...who could possibly remember what happened in the last eight pages all those months ago? It's for that very reason that I can't even comment on the Deitch story because I decided the best thing to do is wait and read it when the whole thing is done coming out, in six months or whenever. The only things I actually read in this comic were David Collier's piece which was nice, and Th. Metger and Bob Fingerman's *Mr. Hypno-Googoopizin' Man*, an incredibly pointless waste of five pages. Published by Fantagraphics



UNDERWATER #4 by Chester Brown



Grudgingly, I have to admit that after actually sitting down and reading this issue of Underwater, I'm starting to change my first opinions about this series. Yes, at first it was very shocking, kind of annoying, and seemingly incomprehensible...this weird comic written in gibberish, but now, maybe because over the course of the last year I've grown accustomed to the idea, or maybe my own mind is just a little more open, I'm willing to actually read this crazy thing, and admit that it's pretty neat. I'm still not really sure what the fuck is going on, but I also realize that's the point. This issue also features a six page didactic exploration that questions society's views and treatment of "schizophrenic," and while the piece did seem weirdly out of place in this comic, it did make me think at the same time, and I doubt I would have come

across it in a psychology journal. There's also a short bible adaptation dealing with the question of faith.
Published by Drawn & Quarterly

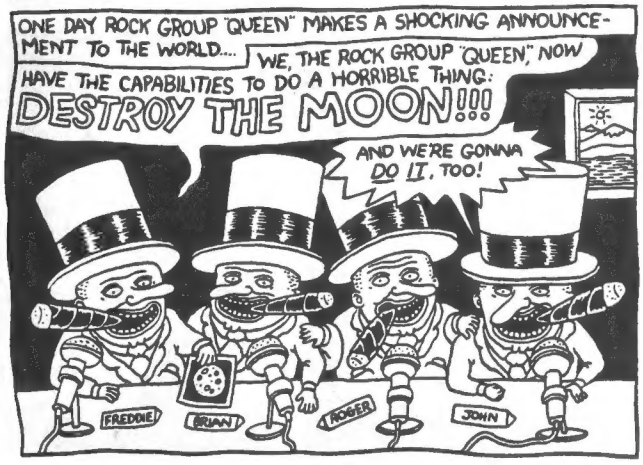
BOOM BOOM #3 by David Lasky

This is an absolutely crazy comic. I mean it's insane. David penciled and wrote it in twenty-four hours. It doesn't make sense, but it's quite good. The art is a little rough at times, but what do you expect, it was drawn in twenty-four hours. There's also the wacky imaginary tale of "Tim Redwing" (cartoonist Jim Woodring, visiting "Jake Kurtsy" (cartoonist Jack Kirby), and being shown Kurtsy's "Lost Masterpiece," and adaptation of James Joyce's Ulysses. It's pretty good.
Published by AEON

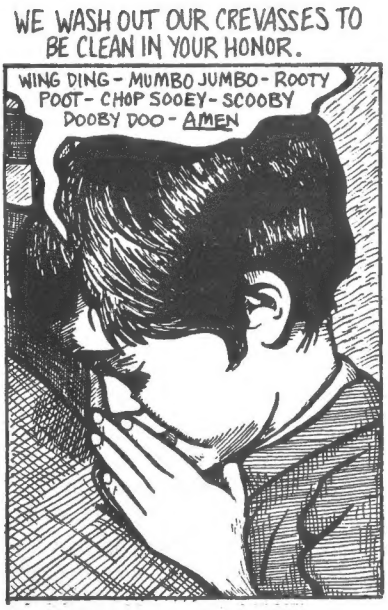
BEWARE THE MUCUS MAN
words by Mike Weiss, art by Lisa Weiss

A very little mini-comic, with simple art that's adequate, and a nice little story about the possible impact of the things we say on others. It's so little that if I were to say more, I'd ruin the whole thing for you. For a copy send $1.00 to the creators @ Box 187, Milltown, NJ 08850-0178, USA

SMELL OF STEVE #4
by Brian Sendelbach


ONE DAY ROCK GROUP "QUEEN" MAKES A SHOCKING ANNOUNCEMENT TO THE WORLD....
WE, THE ROCK GROUP "QUEEN," NOW HAVE THE CAPABILITIES TO DO A HORRIBLE THING:
DESTROY THE MOON!!!
AND WE'RE GONNA DO IT, TOO!
FREDDIE
BRIAN
ROGER
JOHN

Smell of Steve #4, poignantly, and somewhat humorously illustrates many of the woes of our modern society. In particular this issue deals with many aspects of the rock star mythos and and the modern perception of the rock star. The most important and best stories show the way many of these modern rock stars can manipulate politics, or (woe to them) even be manipulated by politics (for example in *Phil Collins Meets the President* and *Queen Vs. Van Halen For the Future of the Moon*!). Also included are several bizarre short strips, one about a strange wedding custom, and one possibly autobiographical strip called *Uncle Fart*. The best aspect of this comic for me had to be Brian's excellent cartoony artwork. For a copy send $2.50 to P.O. Box 20427, Seattle, WA 98102, USA



EMPTY LIFE #3
by Mike Tolento

Another mini-comic that I didn't care for. The art was okay, but nothing I'd actually look at twice. Most of the stories didn't make much sense to me...seemed to be in the vein of, "I made this on drugs, aren't I a genius," or something like that. I don't know. A two page story about aliens made sense, but I can't figure out what the whole point of this comic was. For a copy send $1.00(?) to Mike Tolento @ 19 Sunset Rd., Hamden, CT 06514, USA

CRIME CLINIC #2 by Dylan Williams

WHILE IN PRISON THE GANG HAD LEARNED OF A NEW AND ALMOST FOOLPROOF METHOD OF BANK ROBBERY.
THE "BARON" LAMM METHOD. THE ESSENCE OF THE LAMM FORMULA WAS PLANNING.
FOR THE MOST PART, HEISTS WERE A HAP-HAZARD AFFAIR. THE PIERPOINT GANG WAS ONE OF THE FIRST TO USE ANY KIND OF SYSTEM.
ONE: SPEND SEVERAL DAYS SETTING IT UP. KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT THE BANK. FLOOR PLANS, ETC.
TWO: ACT IT OUT. REHEARSE. EVERY MOVE. ACT IT OUT WITH A MOCK-UP. EACH MAN HAS A SET JOB.
THREE: TIMING. A MUST TO PULL THE JOB OFF. STICK TO THE PLAN, EVEN IF IT MEANS LEAVING WITH NO CASH.
FOUR: THE GETAWAY. A FAST, NON-DESCRIPT CAR, A MAPPED ESCAPE ROUTE, AND A RACE CAR EXPERIENCED DRIVER. ALL TIMED...
..TO THE SPLIT-SECOND.
10

This issue of the Crime Clinic features a comic book biography of the notorious gangster John Dillinger. It's a very straight-forward, fact-filled, mostly narrated account of his short life. If you're interested in a short overview of Dillinger's life, this is the a good place to look (although I'm no expert on John Dillinger). If you're not too interested in facts about the man though, you might be bored by this comic, as it seems to specifically try not to involve you emotionally in the story. The art is very well balanced, but sometimes looks a bit awkward, and the characters have a tendency to all look the same. Overall though, this is a pretty good, unique use of the comic book medium.
Published by Slave Labor Graphics

COMICS COMMENTS

SILLY CYBERDADDY
by Joe Chiappetta

As a publisher, I've known for some time that the internet would be perfect for promoting my comics. The unique things that even I know about computers are that they're light-weight and great on family outings. Oh, wait, that's my camcorder. No. Computers provide color or black and white graphics at the same costs (as opposed to a color magazine ad). Information can be updated constantly (unlike a static magazine ad). Most importantly, everybody around the world has access to your info.

O.K. So how do I get Silly Daddy comics on this system and what's it gonna cost me?...I don't know. The only thing I do know is that browsing the internet is like $25.00 a month.

Well, then I read this article in the Comics Journal about Activists!, the first ever comic book to be distributed solely by electronic means. I mean, you can't hold this in your hands. Instead, you get on the internet and read it on your computer. That's the only way you can read it.

For a not for profit book, it's perfect. But what about Silly "capitalist" Daddy? I'm trying to sell printed stuff. Who'd want to own something they can get anytime on the internet? Won't work, right?

Well then I read Publishers Weekly. They'll release a single chapter of the book they're trying to sell. This free taste is accompanied by ordering info, should you like what you read. Oh. That's how they do it. (Later I found out that record labels do the same with CDs, offering thirty seconds from a particular song.) Fine. So I show a few pages to hook 'em in. Great! Where do I sign?

Uh, wait. Three minor setbacks. I don't have a computer, don't even know what a modem looks like (or how to spell it), and who do I pay to be on the internet? The phone company? The Kingpin? What gives? I don't know.

So I'm at the Chicago Comicon, promoting the old fashioned way, at my table, and somehow start talkin' to this guy named Dietrich, who does computer consulting. He said to come and check out his booth on the other side of the con. Hmm. Computer consulting. What's that all about? Sounds expensive.

So later I'm strolling around and come across a booth called Red Planet. But I don't see any Red Planet Comics, nor any fancy promo posters. Just some computer on a table. Oh. Cerebus is on screen, and hey, that's Dietrich behind the table.

I'm about to pick his brain about what Red Planet can do for me, but preface with the fact that the net confuses me, even though I've been reading up on it, and isn't it cool that someone put out a comic completely on the net.

"That was us," says Dietrich, "We did that for Joyce (Brabner) after her publisher got cold feet and decided to destroy all printed copies of her comic." I gasp a bit and Dietrich further explains how the net works. Meanwhile I'm thinking, "Bottom line is, if this guy's price is right, color me Red Planet." He finally gives me a ball park figure and it's reasonable.

"It works like this," he says. "You pay us a monthly fee and we scan in your artwork, organize your presentation, and provide you with a Silly Daddy web site. This means that anyone browsing the net for comics can find Silly Daddy. From our hard drive, people can access your latest graphics, previews, behind the scenes photos, sketches, unused pages, or anything else you want us to scan in. We update the site frequently so your site doesn't become what's known as a cobweb." (He smirks. Ten seconds later I get it.)

Think of the net as a body, and a web site as one of it's parts. The key is to provide info and graphics that readers can't get anywhere else, something new that will make them want to go to your site.

So a week later, we meet for lunch and I meet Dietrich's partner, Glenn. Dietrich confesses that Glenn is more the computer guru, while he is more the math whiz. (Which is good since Dietrich actually looks like a math wiz.) (Glenn looks like an ex-surfer, closet Chuck Norris fan, and he's a silly daddy himself.) Lunch goes well. Me and Glenn talk comics while Dietrich only mumbles. Earlier he hit himself in the mouth with his tennis racquet. (?)

After lunch, despite being dizzy from a 105 degree Chicago heat wave, we made it to Glenn's computer. He showed me other people's web sites, which he referred to as "home pages." I guess that's like each publisher's table of contents or intro-graphics. Lot's of publishers have sites: Cerebus, Fantagraphics, Dark Horse, Bone, etc. Cerebus came up in conversation again. It turns out that Glenn started his own unauthorized Cerebus fan web-site years ago. After a while, Sim found out, liked it, and gave him carte-blanche to do whatever he wanted with it.

And, as if I didn't need further reasons to go with Red Planet, they'll mail my E-mail to me, either on a disk, or printed out (since I don't have a computer).

Internet possibilities now excite the freakin' heck out of me and I encourage other independent publishers to get out there any way you can. I realize that this is somewhat of an informative article, but I don't have Avengers priority A-1 clearance to give out their prices (I will re-emphasize though, that they're reasonable). If Red Planet interests you, contact them at Red Planet, Box 270, 1507 E. 53rd St., Chicago, IL 60615, or call 1-800-RED-0932.

And while I'm plugging away, my spiffy new Silly Daddy website is at: http://www.redweb.com/sillydaddy

So look me up.

Joe Chiappetta. 2209 Northgate. N. Riverside, IL 60546

LICKIN' STICK by M. Fleener

Every time I hear about a comic book store getting busted for obscene material, I immediately want to check out the offending items for sheer voyeurism and to see if it's all it's cracked up to be, so, last week I went to the local store, Thrill Books, here in Encinitas and purchased a sampling of Glenn Danzig's *Verotik* line-bought *Verotika*, #4-6, *Satanika* #0 and #3 and *Death Dealer* since some of these titles were mentioned as those seized by the police. Now, Danzig has been annoying me for 15 years with his Master of Black Arts schtick 'cuz, it's obvious, like most Rock Musicians, he's over-compensating for Something. I figured it was Little Man Syndrome but after reading these comics, I finally figured it out...

Glenn Danzig has The World's Smallest Penis.

He does! He couldn't get his rocks off with the Misfits, or Samhain or his current band, so no he's publishing comics that are Fuckin' AWESOME, MAN! They Kick Ass! He's givin' th' people what they want! RAD!! I could tolerate his Ooga-Booga act when he stayed within his musical venue, but now he's on MY turf and since I'm such a fuckin' expert, I'm telling him and YOU what a cornball piece of monetary manipulation *Verotik* comics are. Power fantasies, same thing as the capes n' tights superduper hero stories. Same exaggerated musculature, scary women with large, firm breasts, same Golden Age drawing style, same crappy computer colorization. I guess no one believes in using flat color planes anymore-Oh, I see why! All those split fonts and psychedelic gradations KICK ASS!

These comics aren't for everyone, you know. They're for the Special People who have embraced their Inner Demon. Society sez That's A Bad Thing but Glenn Danzig *understands*...he alone knows the Power and with his Army of Darkness shall set you free! But beware, says Danzig, these are powerful forces, so don't mess with it. Just let *ME* mess with it so I can publish these "cutting edge" comics. Whatta guy! All he wants to do is expand our perceptions of reality and here I am bad mouthin' him. Good thing the comics are selling well so he won't pay me no never mind while he's cashing those checks at the bank.

Let's get down to the thang here. *DEATH DEALER*: 48 pages (color) with 8 pages ads and photos of the Unholy Trio - Danzig, Frazetta and Simon Bisley. Cost: $5.95. Art: School of Frazetta. Story: School of Conan. Big guy fights and graphically kills a bunch of freaks, sees a big black horse and chases it, tho he knows not why! Finds himself in a castle, fights and kills a beast and finds a magic mask. This involves even *more* killing, then a band of chesty Cat Women lead him to his Rightful Throne (too bad he has to kill one o' them kitties!). All of a sudden the Big Black Horse appears and wants to be his friend. Far out! The pages of this book are falling apart after only two readings.

SATANIKA: 32 pages (color). Cost: $2.95-$3.50. 8 pages ads and letters (most endearing is one from a gal who thinks she transmitted to Danzig the idea for Satanika. Danzig thanks her for her help by explaing that since *his* mind is so full of brilliant ideas, he sent the idea to her for safekeeping. "Seeing as your brain was pretty empty, I didn't think you'd mind." I can just hear her thinking when she reads this reply, "Gee, that wasn't an Insult. We're psychically joined now, so I would *know* if it was an insult. Right?" Issue #0: The origin of the devils. The rebellion in Heaven..."And they were Fallen!!" Big muscular brutes they are, too!! Lotsa exclamation points in these comics!! Danzig, the writer, reveals their Names...Satan, Balam, Astaroth, Naamah...OOOOH! I'm gettin' scared just typin' them names! (Excuse me while I envision The White Light and burn some sage. Whew! That's better)...Anyway, the biggest Bad Ass is the demon, Dalkiel who goes to earth and mates with a mortal-a woman, of course. Ain't no Devil Queers!! Blood and semen combine to form a female "Devil Thing"...with big tits. The rest of the issue is pin-up portraits by various artists of Satanika-type babes and they, too, KICK ASS. Issue #3 is 24 pages of Satanika in battle with The Demoness. Nice tits!

VEROTIKA #4, 5, and 6. 32 pages (color). Cost: $2.95. 4-10 pages of ads, letters. Actual attempts to tell a story and I liked seeing Stan Shaw's art. The story that's causing all the fuss is "A Taste of Cherry" in issue #4. A cheerleader is on her way to school (once again-Nice tits!) and is abducted by three men in a van who torture, rape and kill her-all recorded on film for none other than Daddykins who paid to have the whole thing done. End of story. So what? You call this a plotline? By page two you know this is going to be as predictable as a thirty minute television sitcom, AND there are going to be certain people in the community who are going to be just as predictable and cause a lot of trouble for the folks who are selling these comics. Censorship is not what I'm advocating and I don't believe that crap that pornography encourages violence towards women, but it *IS* a story of violence and the victim is a woman and I don't like it, mainly 'cuz it's a stupid story. Nothin' KICK ASS about it, just a lurid Power Fantasy. A writer friend of mine, Don Waller, wryly commented that the kind of people who buy these comics "Are really afraid of the thing that's between Lucille's legs," and that's the truth. When I used the term "over-compensation" earlier, consider the words Debbie Goad of *Answer Me!* uses in her article *Why I Hate Men*: "Look at my car! Look at my gun! Look at my guitar! Look at the big fish I caught...Please don't look at my dick!" This is why I say Glenn Danzig has The World's Smallest Penis.

Another thing, I rather doubt Danzig gives a rat's ass whether or not his fans feel "connected" to him. He's a businessman who knows what sells-controversy, sex and violence. That's nothing new. Don't you know he's a Genius that's taking a Fuckin' Risk, Mannnn? This kind of hero worship gives me a headache because these bozos don't realize how *close* they are to being exactly like the right-wing Christian Fundies! You got The Big Daddy (Danzig) who has The Power (Ooga-Booga) and knows how to merchandise to an eager flock of consumers who support everything he does.

Am I saying you shouldn't buy these comics? FUCK NO! Support your local comic shop, read what you want and buy what you will, but if you expect *approval*, good luck, but that is the whole idea isn't it? You read the Verotik line of comics because you're so twisted, so weird, soooo misunderstood and oh, so special. Fucking poseurs is what you all are.

That goes for Glenn Danzig as well. If he reads this and thinks I'm a bitch/cunt/whore/etc., so be it. At least I know I don't have The World's Smallest Penis.

The other thing I want to mention is Dori Seda. It's been almost eight years since she died. I want to see a compilation of her comic work, goddamnit! Why has this not taken place? After her all too soon demise, her mother attempted to confiscate all her work, deeming it "smut" but fortunately Dori wrote a document that was later declared a will and all her work was awarded to her boyfriend, Don Donahue. I heard Ron Turner was going to publish her last book. So what's the problem, huh?? Eight years is a long time and I'm afraid people will forget or never discover

what a unique artist Dori Seda was. All it would take to get the ball rolling is one little postcard and a 23¢ stamp. Write on there, "WE WANT DORI!!!" and send this to: Ron Turner, c/o Last Gasp Eco Funnies, 777 Florida St., San Francisco, CA 94110, or FAX 415-824-1836.

SELF PUBLISHING FORECAST 1995-96 SEASON by Sirk Productions

We blew it! Woo Hoo! Let us tell you all about it. The way we bungled the printing, the distributing and the financing of our book. We've been putting out our own comics for years but we never had a print run of over, say, five hundred copies. This time around we wanted to really get our work 'OUT THERE,' make it look professional, get it distributed and into stores that hadn't carried our work before. We've done it all backwards, out of order and best of all by ourselves.

We've been doing this wacky self-publishing thing since '92 and it's still all very new to us. Our print runs have been easy to promote and sell because of their size. The printing costs have been affordable, the distribution was simple and we sold out every time. A higher print run was generally not an option because the cost was too high. We figured the easiest way around the problem was doing a newsprint tabloid because it's a bargain for as many copies as we get. We thought about it and thought about it until we realized newsprint was the cheapest way, and that is absolutely the best way for us. So we decided to go with the bargain. It allowed us the freedom to do a book with a large page count and best of all, color. Even with two colors, plus black it's not going to be as expensive as doing black only on nice paper, or so we thought. We found out AFTER we did the whole book with two colors that if we had done it with only one color and black (and a few less pages)--we could have saved money and time. The price to print the book had increased and now we have to plug away selling more copies than we first had anticipated when we began this project. (10,000 copies is considered a small run on the newsprint web press and originally we would have had to sell 2,000 copies to break even. Now with the costs of color and shipping we have to sell twice that many.) The lessons of small print runs and the crash course in economics 101 that comes with the lessons did not prepare us for the leg-work involved in MASS distribution. This is when having a publisher would be a good thing, or would it? We're not sure if the way we do business is the best way to sell our work, but we can't imagine someone else doing the job as sincerely.

Promoting, manufacturing, distributing and selling our work is a pain in the ass, especially when all along we're trying to continue writing and drawing new work. It's a full time job that a publisher could do for us, but how could we expect the publisher to treat our work with the same care? A publisher with a roster of artists is going to work full time promoting their entire roster. If we were a part of that roster our work would not receive the same attention it does in our own hands. They may do a better job and we will definitely make dumb mistakes, but who cares? If we handle it at least we can oversee and understand how our book sells, who's buying it and where.

The choice of doing it ourselves wasn't difficult for us to make, so we never harped on it long. The name of this game is DISTRIBUTION, that's the part of it that's rough. It's a cakewalk when it's a small print run and four or five stores in the area will carry our work. The 10,000 we have to sell changes the way we go about the whole process of distributing and selling the work. We've gotta make back our investment which is more now, remember Economics 101? Well we must have just got caught up in drawing and coloring the book. We knew that if we were going to print 10,000 of them, the book had to be worth printing in the first place. So we made all the fuss drawing and coloring the damn thing that now when it comes time to do the business, we're spent. And those thoughts of going with a publisher surface in frustration. Frustration with the distributor who won't return our calls, with the printer, the bank.

The established publishers may have direct channels to distributors and stores, but those channels are not necessarily receptive or open to us at all. We anticipated this and researched markets on our own. Lists were made of every possible place that might carry our work, and comic stores only make up half of the lists. We plan on mailing promotional copies of our book to all the stores on the list whether we employ a distributor or not. The distributor may carry our book, but there's little hope that they'll promote it at all. The distributor's catalog will most likely list the book without an accompanying picture or anything that might help sell our book.

We understand that the comics industry is really changing the way books are distributed. Apparently it's more difficult now to get independent work into stores than it was before. Is it ironic that the situation doesn't affect the way small publishers like us do business? We're still all barely able to get our work printed and distributed and there's still barely any network between all the small publishers and the stores. Is it naive to think that the small publishers could create their own distribution network by working together somehow? Now that we finally realize we should have had our own network all along, it might be too late.

Dishwasher, the Internet, and the Decline of Comics by Bobby Madness

Now it's not my intention to just attack everything. This column may seem extremist, but really it's not. Extremism would be like hostages or something, and sacred cow mutilation isn't really the point either. No, there's something deeper here. I think Mia Zapata was killed by Joan Jett, but I'll save it. This is about comic zines.

Okay, first off, this internet shit is totally making for some of the most boring layout and lazy zine making I've ever seen! I don't know how many fonts there are, but there's like ten cool ones, and I've seen them everywhere. I mean, aren't computers like tools for helping, saving paper, communication, etc.? They're being used as producers of entire magazines, and it's extremely boring.

The second thing about the internet or information highway or

whatever the fuck the massive generalization term is, is it's pretty exclusive and classist, I think. It definitely separates information from lower classes, you must have money to have a computer. You need the knowledge and education to use one, the time to learn etc., things that are completely unattainable for large segments of people, thus creating an elitist network. Lack of information between classes reinforces stereotypical roles between people that should be communicating the most.

With rising pulp costs and the amount of good writing glommed off the net, it's unrealistic to dismiss it completely, but as we get the full effects of electronic hyper technology (i.e. complete and total surveillance via address tracking, social security numbers, etc.) the warning signs seem clear: the potential for bad shit to come from this is equal, if not greater than the potential for good use. The corporations who rake from this method of transmission and the potential for government control are enough to make me skeptical.

The classism of zines is a symptom of the capitalist system co-opting everything. One example is Dishwasher zine, a great mag. As an exposure of a slice of undetected culture, and hilarious writing, it is classic zine literature. Yet under closer inspection, the middle class tones stand out like a black person in Maximum Rock N' Roll. The patronizing infatuation with something slummier than that which he was meant for seems to subtly lurk in there. The writing is good, but Letterman show good? Does that make sense? The internet seems to have dulled the edge of a cultural phenomenon that definitely has its roots somewhere else.

This can also be seen in comics, where lower classes of citizens have a lot of trouble getting high recognition. While there are some exceptions (like Naughty Bits getting published even though the art sucks) for the most part, female, minority (I fucking hate that word) and lower class artists get a nod of the hat, an anthology or two, maybe marketed as some oddity ("Look! they drew a comic and they're black!) but otherwise not really rewarded with the meteoric bandwagon producing media onslaught of success that white upper class men get. I mean, if Ariel Bordeaux was a white guy she'd probably be doing album covers and spot illustrations for the Voice!

So in other words, the underground press is in danger of becoming just like anything else these days - exploited, watered down, tame, sexist, racist and if people embrace the commerce system the way it is, fine, but at least they can quit faking and straight up be a sell-out without trying to market their crap to a cool audience. With every advantage going for them, you'd think some publishers would help out artists who do good stories or good art. With their computers, networks of oh so cool friends, and cash from their parents, they could help out a great cartoonist or writer with potential. Instead, they print their cousin, or college friend, or some trendy guaranteed seller. Who knows how many fantastic cartoonists committed suicide due to being closed out of any scene whatsoever, frustrated to the point of emptying a slug into their face, or swallowing pure cyanide by distilling poison.

Believe me, I know what I'm talking about because I'm in the process of selling out right now. Maybe soon I'll even have a computer. But when that happens, I won't forget how unfair and fucked the lie system that groups us together treats people, and how its imminent destruction is essential. Okay, well maybe I will.

by Eric Searleman

Can a comic book promotional item ever be more popular than the comic it's based on?

If it's a t-shirt, the answer is unarguably, yes.

In November of 1994, Slave Labor Graphics published the first issue of my comic. Jazzbo was a modest little book which sold like shit. Unlike more high-profile debuts, my comic barely made a dent in the comic book collective consciousness. I received a handful of congratulatory letters and some nice phone calls, but otherwise, it was a book speeding down the dust bin fastlane.

As a lark, I took my contractual payment from the publisher and printed up a handful of Jazzbo t-shirts. I passed them out to friends and relatives as gifts.

I never intended these swanky shirts to be promotional items, but I confess it made me smile to see record store clerks wearing them and musicians on stage wearing them. It didn't take long for the shirts popularity to eclipse interest in the comic book.

A friend called me up the first weekend after I gave him his shirt. While at a mall, two girls approached him. He gleefully told me that Jazzbo had magically become his entry into the world of teenage girls. We were talking on the phone, but I could tell he had a big nasty smile on his face.

My girlfriend's brother is a stage actor in Chicago. He told me he wears his Jazzbo shirt to dance auditions. He's never out of work and I humbly take a teeny, tiny, weenie, bit of credit for his blossoming theatrical success.

Wearing the shirt myself, I can verify to how much attention it receives. In fact, every time I wear it, I get positive feedback. In July, I was thinking of ways to scrape together money to go to the San Diego Comic Convention. I gathered up a bundle of clothes and headed down to Buffalo Exchange, a used-clothing boutique. The hip girl behind the counter (complete with body branding and nose tusks) quickly pawed through my out-of-style, faded and stained clothes. Nothing interested her except the shirt on my back. "That's cool," she said. If it would have paid for a plane ticket to San Diego, I would have sold it to her in a nano second.

The second issue of my comic came out in March of 1995. While drawing it, I felt a rush of cartooning epiphany course from my brain, to my fingertips, through my cheap, synthetic-blend paint brush and on to the blank page. It was exciting. I felt that I had reached a level of sequential storytelling that was missing in my previous work. The pieces were finally starting to fit together in my head. Understanding Comics, indeed!

Unfortunately, the second issue sold even fewer copies than the

first.

By the time number three was scheduled to come out, the future of my comic was in serious jeopardy. When the solicitation orders started to dribble in, I fully expected the ax to fall. The day I got the call from Slave Labor Graphics' president Dan Vado, I knew the end was at hand.

Even though I felt my comic would attract an audience given time, I couldn't blame Dan for giving me the pink slip. He's running a business after all, and must keep a watchful eye on the bottom line. In the end, I'm thankful that Dan and his partner Craig Pape gave me a two issue forum for what turned out to be a totally uncommercial venture.

A week later, again wearing my Jazzbo shirt, I was approached on campus by a hip, earnest young man. "Jazzbo? What exactly is that?" he asked.

"It's a comic book," I replied.

"Really?! Is it jazz influenced?"

"Yes and no..."

"Is it a political comic?"

"No," I said, but then corrected myself. "Yes, It's political on a personal level; the most basic level."

"I see," he said solemnly, "I'll have to check it out."

Later, walking back to my car with my girlfriend, I asked the most pathetic of all questions: had I originally printed up five hundred Jazzbo t-shirts instead of twelve, would my comic have sold more copies? "Probably not," she said.

She was right, of course. Jazzbo, the comic, was a miserable failure; a combination of futility and unfulfilled potential. On the other hand, the t-shirt, with it's retro font and jazzy scribble, was a raging success.

Maybe I could interest Slave Labor Graphics in starting up a line of casual attire. Hint to the fashion elite: Jazzbo shirts look great with Big Star and Lucky jeans. Order yours today.

LETTER FROM HICKSVILLE
by Dylan Horrocks

Here in Hicksville, it's a glorious summer's day and the locals are all lying on the beach or sitting outside the Rarebit Fiend Tea Rooms drinking chilled beer or lemonade. Even old Farmer Dobbs is taking a break to enjoy the sunshine and the iced drinks, chatting to Dr. Ropata about their favourite Thimble Theatre episodes. At the table next to mine, there's an animated conversation going on which is beginning to get my interest.

Hendryk - who used to run the petrol pumps at the General Store - and Donald, a fisherman of several decades experience, are getting all riled up over something.

"I tell you," Hendryk is saying, jabbing his index finger onto the table with each syllable: "comics are a visual medium. What did that young Eisner fellow call them? 'Sequential art' - that's it. 'Art,' mind you, not 'literature.' It's the pictures that tell the story. Otherwise it's not comics, it's just an illustrated text."

"You're missing the point, mate," Donald slowly replies, and then takes a leisurely sip of his beer. "What I'm trying to t'tell ya is that comics aren't any kind of medium. They aren't essentially this or essentially that; they is what they is - and folks as define them as this or that are just making it up to suit themselves."

"Oh, so now you're saying that the whole business of defining comics is a waste of time? Now I know you've spent too much time out there with your fish, Donald - it's made you lazy! Look, I'll spell it out for you: the point of defining comics is to figure out critical criteria."

"'Critical criteria' eh?" Another sip of beer.

"That's right, you old sea dog. Haven't you read *R.C. Harvey's Art of the Funnies: an Aesthetic History of the Comic Strip*?"

"Course I have. Was alright. Not many pictures, though."

"Well Harvey's point was that by working out what is peculiar to comics then you can see what are the 'essential characteristics' of the medium. And that gives you something from which to say 'that's a good comic.' If you don't know what a comic is, how can you say if it's a good one?"

"I'll say whatever I bloody well like, mate. Don't need any 'essential characteristics' to do that."

"Maybe, but no one bloody listens to you, do they? No, because all you're doing is giving your opinion - which, I might say, you have a tendency to do rather more often than you're asked. And that opinion has no sound basis, since if you can't even say what a comic *is* in the first place, how can you say how it should be done?" Hendryk sits back and lifts his glass, as if toasting his own obvious victory.

Donald is too busy enjoying another pull of beer to notice. After a satisfied sigh, he says: "So your definition of comics is that they're a visual medium, eh?"

"Of course, mate. Pictorial narrative, Sequential art - Scott McCloud has it right in my book. You put two pictures together and you've got a narrative. It's the pictures that make it comics, so it's the pictures that should tell the story. Too many words and you've got illustrated prose, but not comics."

"Tell me then, Hendryk, if I showed you a number of books - a *Frank* story by Jim Woodring with no words, an issue of *Bone*, a *Prince Valiant* strip, a Tony Ross children's book, and a Dickens novel with no illustrations in it, then you tell me: which ones are not comics?"

"Obviously the Dickens isn't. The Tony Ross book isn't if the pictures could be taken away and the text still made sense without them."

"So if the words could survive without the pictures it's not a comic, but if the pictures'd survive on their own without the words, it is?"

"Exactly, you old goat. The same goes for *Prince Valiant*. Often you could just take the text and you'd have the whole story; a bit stilted, mind, but still with all that you need to know what's happened. The pictures on the other hand often jump from scene to scene and skip important bits."

"Well now I know you're drunk, Hendryk," Donald says firmly, taking his hand away from his glass for the first time. "For one thing, you take the pictures away from *Prince Valiant* - or, for that matter most picture books - and you've got crap. It'd be like reading a telex, not a story. The pictures may not give you the bones, but they give you the meat. Reading a comic isn't a contest between the words and the pictures, trying to stake a claim as the best storyteller or the one in charge. It's the whole thing - all experienced together. Whether there are more of one than the other just doesn't mean a damn thing to me long as it hits me on the spot."

"I suppose you're going to tell me Dickens is a comic next," Hendryk replies a little petulantly.

"Why not?" Donald takes his glass up again, with a flicker of a smile.

"But there aren't any pictures!"

"Yes there are. Show me a page in any Dickens novel without pictures. I know what Oliver Twist looks like, and I can picture Dickens' London without ever leaving Hicksville. I've seen 'em in his books."

"Now you're drunk. You haven't seen them, you've read about them. He's told you, not shown you."

"What's the difference?" Donald has that look in his eye he gets when he's fishing.

"All the bloody difference in the world! Words are what you call 'arbitrary' signs - you have to know how to read them for starters. *Anyone* can understand a picture."

"I've seen plenty of pictures I don't understand. When I pick up a comic I'm not looking at it, I'm reading it - words *and* pictures. It takes more than eyes to make sense of it; takes a brain - something you might not be too familiar with, Hendryk."

"Oh, I don't know why I bother with you Donald. You're just not a man of learning. You might have to labour over pictures, but any normal person just looks at them and sees what they see. That's what gives comics and other visual media like film their power. Especially the purest ones like *Frank*, when there's no words in the way."

"On the contrary, *Frank* is full of words." Hendryk's taken the bait and now Donald starts reeling him in. "While I'm reading pictures, my head's full of words - thoughts and feelings and ideas, all tied up with the things I've read or heard or said myself. No doubt it's the same for Jim Woodring while he draws the thing. He's not just drawing - he's writing with pictures. And I don't just see the pictures, I read them."

Hendryk's face has begun to look decidedly unhappy. Donald takes another sip and continues: "So you see, I really don't see what all the fuss is about. Whether something is a comic or an illustrated text or a novel, as far as I can tell, it's still made up of language and it still needs to be read to make any sense of it. Now you can fill it up with pictures or you can fill it up with words. At one point you might let one take over, then the next page it might be the other. I'm used to reading books with thousands of little words going on for ages with no drawings at all, and it's never bothered me. I don't see why I shouldn't allow them a bit of space in my comics too. Hell - let them push the pictures out altogether if they want to - what's it to me? I'm a reader, not some kind of bloody Picture Rights Activist!"

Donald is now in full flight, his cheeks aglow with the afternoon sun and the pleasure of the catch. Hendryk, on the other hand, has lapsed into a sullen silence, trying to give the impression of being interested only in his glass of beer.

"See, Hendryk me old mate, definitions are inventions. We make them up as we see fit, usually with an eye towards whatever we want to be seen as most important about the thing we're defining. Now, this Scott McCloud feller, he's an inventor like his father - and more power to him. He's a good one, with lots of useful ideas. But don't get fooled into thinking he's just a scientist discovering the objective truth about comics, 'cause he's not. He's an inventor, and what he's doing is inventing a way of talking about comics. Just so happens his invention makes the words look a bit less important than the pictures. But that isn't the truth, it's just what's important to him.

I happen to feel a little different. Happens that I like to think of comics as a kind of literature, more than I think of them as art. That's not to say they're not art; it's just what I like about them best is the way they take me on little journeys. Matter of fact, so do paintings, but I guess that's my point: everything is a kind of literature, and that's what I'm most interested in. Even the sea is a bit of literature, and if you never learn to read it, you miss out on a lot of pleasure and a lot of the power in the world. It might even kill you, if you get in your boat an illiterate like that. I like reading. That's all there is to it."

By now, Farmer Dobbs has gone off to check on his sheep, and Dr. Ropata, who has been listening in on the debate, speaks up. "*Tuhi*," he says.

"What about it?" Hendryk sighs.

"*Tuhi* is Maori for writing *and* drawing. It's used for both. I've always thought it was the best word for cartooning. Do you know what *tuhituhi noa* means?"

"Something like 'scrawling' isn't it?" Debs says, looking up from her milkshake.

"Yes, and also sketching or doodling. That's what I call Jules Feiffer or any number of cartoons. Certainly saves me the trouble of an argument like you to have just had."

"We weren't arguing," Hendryk says firmly, sitting up and refilling his glass. "We were sharing our thoughts - a true merging of minds, grappling united with the great issues of the day."

"That's right," Donald concludes, raising his glass. "And I won."

But it's summer, and the cicadas' hum and the seagulls' cry keeps the air warm. The beer flows and the cashews are chewed and in the evening everyone goes down to the beach to sit by the bonfire and laugh at Hendryk's retelling of his favourite Thimble Theatre.

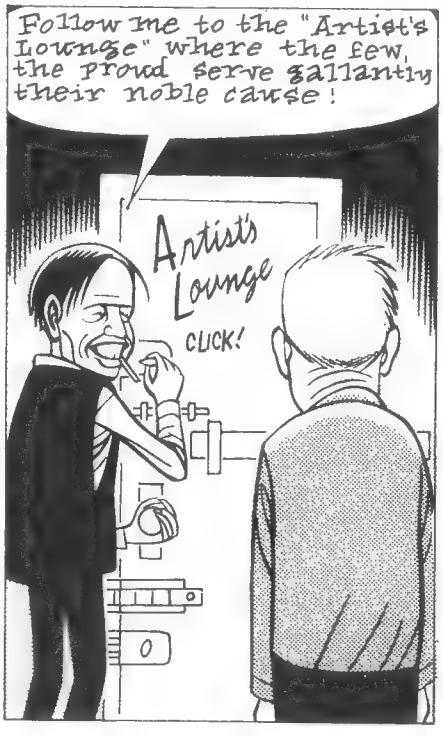
THIMBLE THEATER
NOW SHOWING—"GOBS" OF WORK.
Tomorrow—Money Talks.
YOU'LL FIND THE SCUM OF THE EARTH RIGHT HERE IN THIS PORT- SO WE'VE GOT TO BE CAREFUL IN PICKING OUR CREW
HEY THERE! ARE YOU A SAILOR?
JA THINK I'M A COWBOY?
O.K. YOU'RE HIRED
I'M GLAD WE GAVE OLIVE THE SLIP
YEAH - I'LL BET SHE'S STILL LOOKING FOR A DIME'S WORTH OF LONGITUDE
YOU MEAN ME?
YAS-YOU! YOU'RE THE WHOLE CREW - SNAP INTO IT - TIDY UP THE SHIP - BATTEN DOWN THE HATCHES - SCRUB THE DECKS - PULL UP THE ANCHOR - GET THREE SHEETS TO THE WIND AND THEN GO TO HELM
SMELLS LIKE CODFISH
SEGAR
1-17

"I'd like to complain..." by Dylan Williams

go! You're a SNIVELING, LITTLE COWARD! EXCELLENT! That's a quality I admire in an artist!
Tell me, Pussey... who are some of your in-fluences?

Comic books (comic strips) are now one hundred years old. The medium has changed a lot in that time. A lot of great things (Herge, Jack Cole, the heyday of the newspaper strip, etc.) have come and gone, as have a lot of bad things (Comics Code, low page rates, the assembly line, Vince Colletta, etc.). Change is a good thing, to a point.

We are nearing that point. When the printed text medium was one hundred years old, you had your Shakespeare. After one hundred years of comics we have lost nearly every great talent, in one way or the other. The ones that remain are fringe creators working mostly in other mediums or other countries (the Gary Panter Mall in Japan).



There are most definitely entertaining comics (From Hell, Dirty Plotte, King-Cat, etc.), but even the best of these is nearly invisible. The whole idea of doing great comics is nearly non-existent and rarely a goal. Second rate mediocrity has become a norm rather than an exception. Entertainment is a fine thing but when good entertainment replaces great art as a goal, what does it say of the medium and those practicing it?

This is not to say that *all* comic artists should aspire to "high" art and not entertainment. It *is* to say that modern comic artists must aspire to greatness rather than mediocrity regardless of whether what they aspire to do is art or entertainment.

Often comic artists, out of a sense of inferiority to fine art/literature/film, aspire to "art" but only by taking what has become cliched and trite in comics (superhero, fantasy, etc) and applying surface art techniques to it. The end product is "painted comics," books like Marvels, Blood and the rash of painted hero books by artists like John J. Muth, Alex Ross and so forth. This work is still just the same inferior mediocrity only with a different wrapping. True art in any medium is only true art if it touches something in the view, inspires and makes us think, if it takes full advantage of the medium it's in. The painted comics of Lorenzo Mattoti are some of the few comics done with a directly color medium that should still qualify as art. There are of course, non-painted comics that fit this bill.

Back to the main point. The thing missing from modern popular comics is one word: "great."

To be great, to do something great, to create great art, you must have one thing: "vision." Vision simply means that you see the potential of a medium and use it. The obvious modern example of this is comic artist Chris Ware. The surface style is interesting enough, but the great thing about Ware's work is that it *could not* be done in any other medium. When Ware's work is translated to computers (on the Wired web-site) people have decided to show it one panel at a time, thereby destroying the whole idea behind and integrity of his work.

Modern comic book artists like Dan Clowes, Jim Woodring, Chester Brown, Eddie Campbell, and maybe a handful of others all fall into this category. Unfortunately the work of even these luminaries sells so poorly that most of the major publishers would cancel them. The general audience reading comics is reading them simply for entertainment, for a quick escape.

How many times have I heard, "Oh, who cares? It's just a comic," or, "It's good, for a comic. It's better than most of the other comics out there?" Even I hear this stuff all the time, although most of my friends know this is the quickest way to piss me off (and make me go on ranting for hours). People seem to think that even the greatest comics can't compare to great litera-

ture, poetry, music or film.

This is the point of comics' greatest failure.

For the past fifty-plus years, comics as a popular medium have basically been a vast wasteland.

Admittedly, the medium has been ruled by finance and business since it's inception..."Sell more papers." Money-making and creating lasting art are almost diametrically opposed to one another. The rule has always been, "Don't try to be Michelangelo," don't worry about making fine art just make the reader happy, to make money. From the beginning comic books were a way of making money from repackaged sure things (popular newspaper strips). The standard, however, was good work, even great work.

At one point, doing quality work was actually the best way to earn money in comics. There were bad, hacked out strips like later Ham Fischer's Joe Palooka, but to become a real star (and a millionare, most often) your work had to reach out to the audience. People read Lil' Abner and stopped reading Palooka because it related to them, to the fact that they were human beings. Adults read it as they would a good book. Nowadays strips and comic books in the mainstream are a sterilized, hacked-out, pathetic carnival mirror version of reality, and sales continue to plummet.

Even with all the things that have changed over the last century, entertaining the reader and making money has remained the chief goal. Comics are judged as entertainment, for their popular culture appeal, much like Shakespeare or Dickens were in their own times. But over the last fifty years, standards have changed for the worse. For varied reasons there have been three major changes in the comics reader. 1) Their attention span is about 1/10 of what it was in the 1940's. 2) They have come to expect one or two genres at a time from the medium. 3) The standard of quality has become that of a fourteen year old white male suburban child. I would like to think that the old standards/types of readers are still there, they've just moved on to work/entertainment that fills their needs (not the three above points). Only diehards remain.

In many ways the comic reader or fan has come to rule the medium and often create the work itself. As most of the money, fame and respect left comics, so did the talented master craftspeople. Work is now created by the third or fourth generation fan of that original craftperson. An example follows of the degeneration of the "super hero style."

I should first say that I think the superhero isn't an inherently inferior genre (although many seem to think so). To prove this simply look at American tall-tales, the likes of Paul Bunyon, or Indian/Babylonian epics like the Mahabarata or Gilgamesh.

The style for the example I'll use is the Alex Raymond (Flash Gordon)/Hal Foster (Prince Valiant) illustrative style. Both of these two greats were extremely influenced by the style of great illustrators like J.M. Flagg, Howard Chandler Christy, Joseph Clement Coll and such, their writing by classic hero fiction of the times. From their influence Raymond and Foster arrived at a new point and imparted their own adult vision to their work. In turn, a number of creators in comics saw their work and took inspiration from it. Some were unique visionaries like Lou Fine and the artist/writer team of Jack Kirby and Joe Simon, and some were mid-range hacks like Shelly Moldoff. The visionaries' work stood out and was aspired to by the next generation, Gil Kane and the artist/writer team of Neal Adams and Dennis O'Neal. By this point (the 1960's) the three earlier points had already come into play but some vision and personality remained, but for most of these people, their vision stopped where the pay-check began.

The reader had to feel good about reading comics, but the audience, like the creators, still expected a modicum of quality and vision. Soon the next generation began to emerge, artists/fans like the artist/writer team of John Byrne and Chris Claremont, Michael Golden and Mike Grell. They in turn influenced 80's artists like Art Adams and Jim Lee, and they in turn are influencing the new crop.

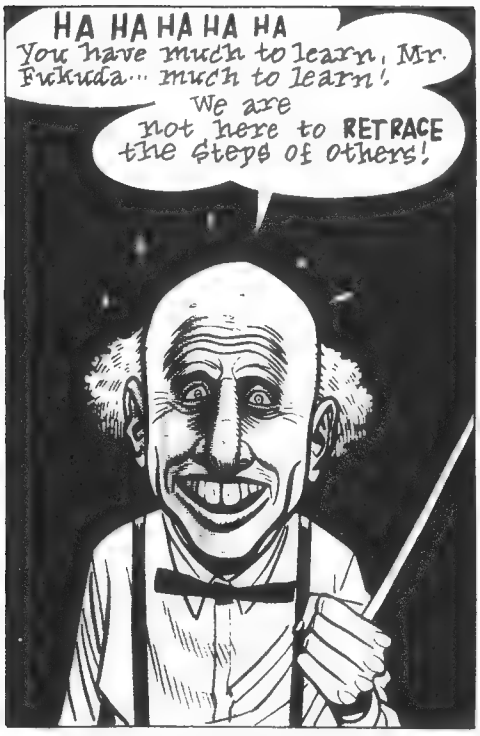
At a certain point, the process became slavish imitation rather than inspiration. At certain points, new bits of originality are/were introduced (Neal Adams advertising art influences or Chris Claremont's TV references) but most of these said little or nothing of their individuality. Sometimes individuals like Alan Moore or Frank Miller would be brought into the mix (Miller was a fan of Bernie Krigstein who in turn adored Simon/Kirby) and bring in a heapin' teaspoon of personality. Unfortunately, that is like adding a shot of whisky to a pint glass of water.

The field of comics is like any other and is judged by its most public and (in our capitalist culture) money-making face. People looking in at comics see Jim Lee's Wildcats as the success and Jim Woodring's Jim as the failure.

Admittedly there are currently much finer comics than the Jim Lee ilk. Some like the Robert Crumb and Art Spiegleman side

...IN THE BEGINNING WE DIDN'T REALLY KNOW WHAT A COMIC BOOK WAS... NOT UNTIL A SKINNY HIGH SCHOOL KID NAMED BILLY SCHUGLE WALKED INTO OUR OFFICE ONE DAY WITH A CREATION THAT WAS TO RESHAPE OUR ENTIRE CULTURE!
WHEN I FIRST LOOKED AT "MISTER POWERFUL" I WAS THUNDERSTRUCK! THIS IS WHAT COMIC BOOKS ARE! IDEALIZED STORIES OF POWER AND HEROISM THAT WOULD FUEL THE IMAGINATIONS OF OUR YOUNG READERS! COMIC BOOKS AND SUPER-HEROES HAVE BEEN INSEPARABLE EVER SINCE!
OF COURSE, BY NOW MR. POWERFUL IS AN INSTITUTION SEEN EVERYWHERE FROM MOVIE SCREENS TO CHILDREN'S LUNCHBOXES BUT IN 1938 IT WAS THE UNDEVELOPED BRAINCHILD OF A GIFTED YOUNG GENIUS...
MR. SCHUGLE

The illustration style in comics is watered down: (starting in the upper left hand corner) from Joseph Clement Coll (1920's) to Hal Foster (1930's) to Lou Fine (1940's) to Neal Adams (1960's) to John Byrne (1970's/80's) to Dan Fraga (present). The same theory applies to almost any school of cartooning or comic books.



remain relatively successful. Both of those artists do descend from the lineage of great artists like Walt Kelly and Chester Gould, and continue to inspire great work from the likes of Joe Sacco and Chester Brown. Unfortunately these artists (Crumb and Speigleman) aren't the standard and Jim Lee is.

In a medium where the standard of quality and success is a preponderance of inbred high school level artists who approximate the technique of a fifth generation Alex Raymond, where does skill fit in? It doesn't! Unfortunately, skill and quality are for the most part, judged, even by those of us on the outside track, against the work that sells. I mean, the number of times I've heard, "Neil Gaiman is a great writer," or, "Matt Wagner's art is amazing" is beyond counting. Even the likes of Chris Ware, David Mazzuchelli and Mark Beyer are compared by reference to the Jim Lee, Alan Moore, and Frank Miller standard. This standard falls to shit if you introduce David Mamet or Paul Auster. Chris Ware and his bunch still hold up though.

I propose that now is the perfect time to change the standards back. The change that is taking place in the comic book industry as I speak (with distribution, etc.) is a perfect chance. A rift has been created within comics between the people who see comics as a grand medium and people who see it as escapist genre fiction that has made it hard to apply one standard for all comics. I propose that the only way to create a new high standard for the medium of comics , is to completely change the standard, to make "good" into "great." To replace Bone, Hate and Teenage Mutant Turtles with Acme Novelty Library, Eightball and Peanuts.

It's just a shift in ideals. One of the best ways to affect this shift is to stop doing comics any favors. Compare work in comics by ourselves and others to great work in any other medium. Whether art or entertainment is an end, comics are about communication, so they can, and should, be compared to work in any other medium of communication. Quit saying things like, "It's great...for a comic." Entertainment is fine, but there's never any excuse for crap.

At a period crucial in the development of the medium, when artists and critics are beginning to reach unparalleled heights in the use of the medium, we must stop judging work by these horrible standards, or the work will stagnate or leave comics in search of higher pay and greater recognition. Of the entire flock of Raw artists, how many continued to push their comic work? Was there a reason for them to?

Comics as a medium aren't 6" X 10" saddle-stitched twenty-four page superhero or autobiographical stories. One of the greatest lessons from the Raw artists (Chris Ware, Spiegleman, Burns, etc.) is that there is *no* set formula for comics in format, style, genre or technique. Unfortunately for comics as a whole, we weren't ready for the lesson. It fell on deaf ears. In grand comic fan/artists' tradition, the response to Chris Ware is, "Wow, look at the way he does that!" not, "Wow, I can do anything I want with comics." The end result, much in the way John Byrne related to Neal Adams, is the Al Columbia story in Zero Zero in the August 1995 issue, just a bad photocopy of Chris Ware.

To use a great quote from Howard Chaykin (who is his own best example), "Being the best comic artist today is like being the world's tallest midget." By best, he meant the most popular/highest selling comic artist.

Even as a reader (fan?!) of comics, why support crap? Why endorse it? Compare what you expect from your comics to what you expect from TV, music, film, books, whatever. Why the fuck would somebody who only narrow mindedly buys indie label music, buy a comic by Time/Warner (like Sandman)? They do though, and a lot of them. What does watered down crap like Cerebus or Stray Bullets offer to a fan of Twin Peaks or Taxi Driver? Demand quality and intelligence; don't let your entertainment insult you.

The burden of the blame cannot rest on the reader. It must lay with the producers. The reader can only choose from what is offered. The blame lays with the critics, creators and historians. The critic must stop being a "company" man: "I like anything Drawn and Quarterly does." The critic must judge work by the highest standard, not the current trend. The critic must fuel the creator to create work of the highest standard.

The creator owes it to the past, present and future artists to produce their best work, while aspiring to greatness. The quality of work produced in the past is a heavy weight indeed, but if you don't find out what's gone before, you will be doomed to repeat it. Don't slavishly copy it either. Draw inspiration from it. Who wants to see another Wally Wood or Frank Frazetta hack like Mark Schultz? What the hell does that achieve? Modern artists all need a kick in the ass, and pushing yourself does that. If you don't push yourself, the next generations will only get worse, and the medium may die before you do.

Lastly the weight of producing good work nowadays lays with the scholar and historian. In many ways some of the most important work in comics in the 80s was the amazing amount of reprints. Many of these books (published by NBM, Dragonlady, Fantagraphics strip reprints, and Marvel and DC classic reprints, as well as books by Eclipse and a number of other black and white publishers) will not be seen for their full importance for years. Unfortunately, thanks to the idea of the "fan" replacing the scholar, the recent research and documentation of the history of comics lays in the hands of six or so men. Try reading the average interview with, or article about, say, Bill Everett, and you'll find out anything you'll need to know about the Sub Mariner, but next to nothing about his use of color for Atlas comics in the 50's.

Now is a great time to do great comics, there's no one to tell you that you can't.

My points are simply these:

- Stop inbreeding
- Push ourselves as artists
- Judge all art/entertainment with one common standard

If we do these few things I honestly believe comics as an important medium will have a future, if not, the preponderance of crap, and death of the artform will be complete.

My reasons for all this are simple, simple and selfish: I worry about having readers for my work. The future of comics seems frighteningly bleak, but I think there is a ray of hope.

So there...go do something great.

PITCH UNGER

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MORT MESKIN: May 1916 to April 1995

by Dylan Williams

Without par was Mort Meskin. Perhaps one of the greatest artists of comic books died this year. As with many lesser talents his name and talent have received little to no recognition (and a *horribly* researched eulogy in the Comics Journal).

Born in 1916 in Brooklyn, New York to Max and Rose Meskin. At Tilden High School he became art editor of the school paper. As a kid he immersed himself in the world of the pulps, the Shadow was his mainstay. He was attracted to the pulp art of Ed Cartier and most specifically the great Herbert Morton Stoops (whose work appears in/on almost every issue of the magazine Blue Book in the twenties and thirties). Influences would also include Austin Briggs and comic strip greats Milton Caniff and Noel Sickles.

After graduating high school he attended the Art Students League of New York and the Pratt Institute from which he graduated in 1938. He immediately went to work as a comic artist (a booming industry at that point) for the Will Eisner/Jerry Iger comic shop. There he drew the Sheena strip which appeared in Jumbo Comics.

His next work was for $5.00 a page at MLJ/Archie in 1940 at the Chesler comic shop (comics were produced almost completely by studios or shops in the first fifteen years of comics). In 1940 he drew the hero stories of the likes of the Press Guardian, Ty-Gar son of Tiger and Dick Storm. His early work was inventive and unique, but most of its appeal lay (as with most of his work) in his storytelling ability. His careful selection of perfect shot to illustrate what is taking place. In 1941 Meskin quit MLJ to work for National/DC Comics.

He was now working for the biggest company in the business. He was given the character *The Vigilante* to draw. On this strip he began to shine and attract the attention of other artists. With story after story he invented a new language of visual dialog of stunning graphic storytelling.

"*Citizen Kane* (1941) influenced us a great deal, all of us. We were very excited about it and spent quite a bit of time discussing it, employing its elements in our work. There was a contest as to who saw it the most times..." Meskin told Jim Steranko. Meskin saw it fifteen times.

Meskin soon took over the job of artist on *Johnny Quick* at DC. On this character he continued to push his storytelling. These stories aren't quite as splashy as the *Vigilantes*, but there is even more clarity of story and intent of the image. In Johnny Quick he would develop a way of illustrating speed simply by having the character appear many times in one panel. At this point he clearly demonstrated a distaste for any kind of stock shot. He also worked on *Starman, Wildcat, Batman* and my covers for DC.

As is the case with many artists in the field he didn't always have time to ink his own work, and so he worked with a number of inkers in his career. Meskin worked chiefly with three major inkers during his career who all started at DC with him. For the first couple of years at DC a teenage Joe Kubert would ink work well beyond his ability at that time. Meskin also worked with George Roussas and Jerry Robinson at the Bob Kane *Batman* studios.

It's there that he began his collaborative career with top *Batman* artist Robinson. Meskin and Robinson left DC after World War II and set up their own shop and produced some of each other's most famous work. *The Black Terror, The Fighting Yank* and *Golden Lad* (pictured) among others for companies like Harvey, Standard and Sparks. Meskin and Robinson took turns teaching at the Art Students League during this time. Meskin was sickly and during this time (pre 1950) he spent some time in the hospital.

Meskin's work at DC had caught the eye of Joe Simon (partner of Jack Kirby) who by the late forties had developed his own lucrative studio with Kirby. Simon quickly gave Meskin a job at the studio. It took some time for Meskin to feel at home drawing (after his time in the hospital) but Simon was willing to spend time coaching him and his partner Robinson and friend/inker Roussos who inked his first work for Simon. For the studio Meskin seemingly drew more stories than before or after in titles like *Black Magic, Headline, Justice Traps the Guilty, Capt. 3D, Young Romance, Boys Ranch* and *The Strange World of Your Dreams* (a title he came up with). Much of this work is still easy to find *and* quite good. All the time working for Simon and Kirby he would entertain fellow studio artists with tales of life and love in the hospital.

After the Comics Code was effected in the mid-fifties the Simon and Kirby studios went under and Meskin went back to DC with George Roussos (Robinson entered the world of newspaper strips). Along with Roussos, Meskin pumped out hundreds of stories for DC's *House of Secrets, House of Mystery, My Greatest Adventure*, and others (all still relatively common and cheap). He would sometimes ink his own work and sometimes work with Roussos. The self-inked work is some of his least splashy and greatest work in storytelling. He stopped using splashy inking techniques, stopped using splashy layouts and surpassed almost any comic storytelling ever done. He worked at DC the second time from the mid-fifties to the mid-sixties.

After quitting comics he embarked on a long career as a storyboard artist for the advertising firm BBD&O. He retired in 1982 but kept drawing and painting.

He is survived by his wife Molly (whom he married in 1967), five children, five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

I've avoided devoting much space to my opinion of Mort Meskin's artistic merit simply because his work inspires me beyond words. His facility with this most difficult of mediums is enough to inspire us youngsters for the next millennium, so I'll shut up...go buy some of his comics.

"Mort Meskin was a consummate professional, dedicated to his work. A great talent." - Jack Kirby

BREATHTAKING MOMENTS LATER...
OH, ANCIENT SONS OF AZTEC CHIEFTANS...
WOW! THEY'VE GOT THE OLD STONEPUSS TALKING! I'D BETTER ACT BEFORE HE SAYS SOMETHING INDISCREET!
THIS HAD BETTER BE A BULL'S-EYE!
LIGHTS OUT CHUM!
CRASH!
QUICK--- LIGHTS!
WHY... HE... HE'S GONE!
AND HINTZICHOLOPTI IS SILENT! HE NO LONGER DESIRES THIS SACRIFICE! THE INSPIRED STRENGTH OF THE YOUNG ONE WAS AN OMEN!
THE SACRIFICE WILL PROCEED!
SEE--- THE IDOL TALKS ONCE MORE--- WHA-!
OH AZTEC MEN ... FALL UPON THE SPANIARDS WITH TOOTH AND DAGGER, AND TEACH THEM THAT THE DAYS OF SLAVERY AND OPPRESSION ARE OVER!

an unpublished page from a 1946 *Golden Boy* story drawn and inked by Meskin

an interview with Tom Hart

by Jeff LeVine conducted October 10th, 1995, long distance over the telephone

Jeff: How are you doing today?

Tom: I'm doing good. It's a day off from my job, so it was nice. I actually managed to relax and do things aside from comics and stupid shit like that. I cleaned my room a little, and I applied for another job, and I got my laundry together, which is a big accomplishment. Hopefully I'll wash it tonight.

Jeff: What kind of job did you apply for?

Tom: Any kind of job that the big, really wonderful, organic supermarket will give me. They need clerks of all kinds behind their cheese and deli counters, and they need a busser for their cafe. That's a really fun job and I'd like to do it, but they probably don't pay enough. So, I don't know...

Jeff: You don't make a living from doing your comics?

Tom: No, but I'm hoping to soon. The people at Kodansha...we've been talking for around nine months. I've probably foolishly been waiting any day for them to say, "Okay, we're ready to start sending you money," or, "we're ready to start asking you to do finished work," or something like that. It sort of makes it easy to apply for bad jobs and not look for a good one. I keep thinking they're going to come through any minute, but I'm starting to wonder if that's necessarily the best thing to do.

Jeff: What kind of comics would you do for them?

Tom: I would do short twelve page funny, picture based stories involving a character that looks a lot like Hutch Owen. Jon Lewis and I named the character Pitch Unger. So, I'd just be doing twelve page stories of fruity little things where, I don't know...Pitch looks at some flowers and gets stung by a bee or something. I don't know exactly, because we've (meaning me and Jon) been sending them proposals constantly. We've been working up roughs and doing a couple of finished pages. And they're always too complex, too many ideas, too much story, too long, not enough characterization, not enough funny pictures of Pitch.

Jeff: According to...

Tom: According to the editors. We always get feedback back from them. I'm taking this to an extreme and I'm assuming the kind of stories that they'd like to pay me for and which I'd be happy to draw are just really simple stories like the one I just described.

Jeff: Are these stories collaborations with Jon Lewis?

Tom: They were going to be, but I think all the talk back and forth with the editors has kind of knocked Jon out of the whole equation. Mostly I didn't want to do it on my own because it's just too much agonizing solitary work. Jon suggested, "Why don't I write some things and you can draw them," and I thought that was a wonderful idea. But I came to find out that they really don't want comics that are written. (laughs) They really just want comics that are just a bunch of pictures. Jon got really frustrated, reasonably so I think, and just said, "You can do this as well as the two of us could," and he's right.

Jeff: So you don't get as frustrated dealing with editors?

Tom: I don't think it's that. I think it's more that the particular things that Jon was good for, and the reason the two of us were collaborating, were the exact things that the editors told us repeatedly were unnecessary...interesting complex story ideas, and funny...just that basically.

Jeff: Do you think that some of those things that you worked on together might see the light of day, or are they just proposals that you'll never develop?

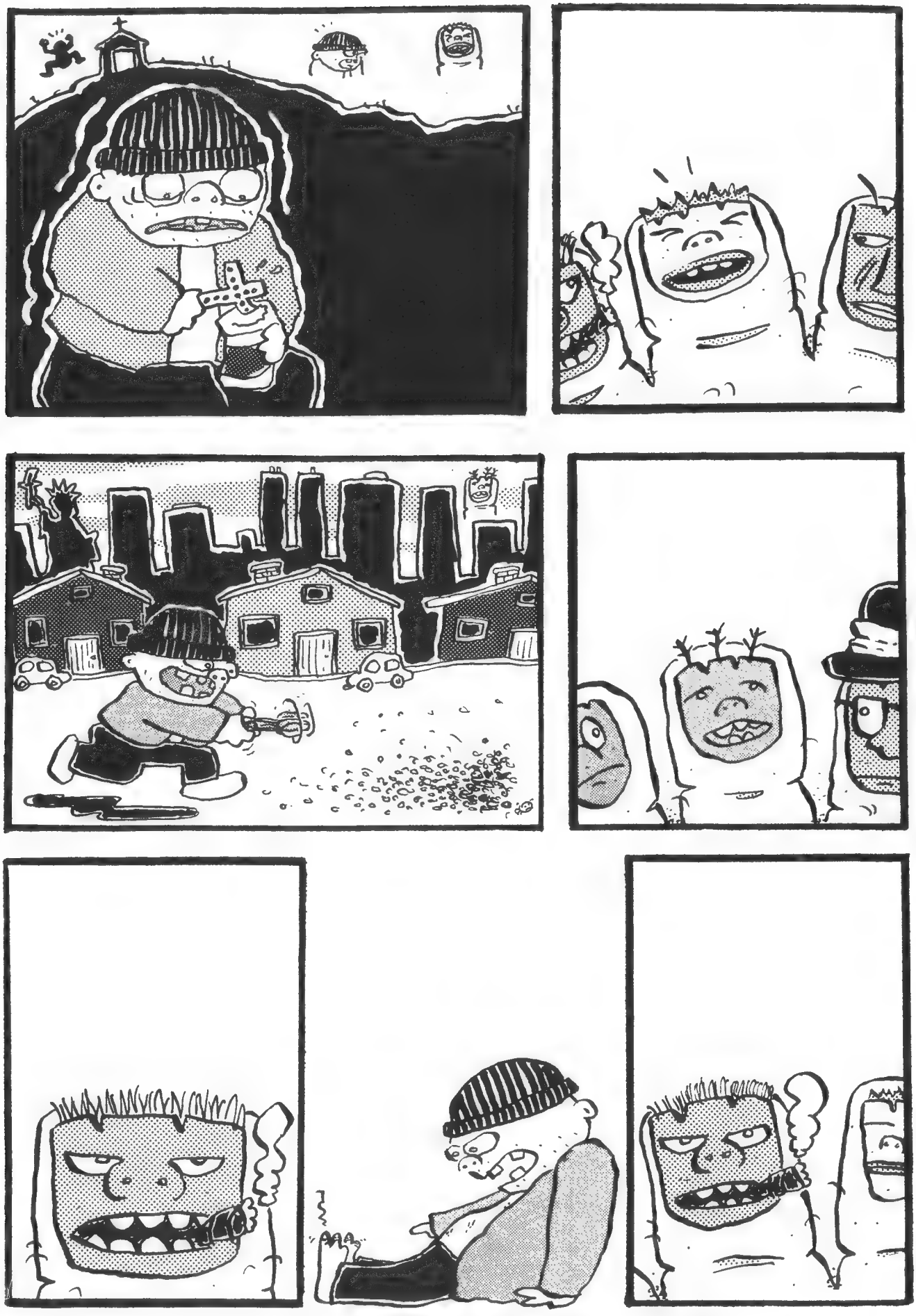
Tom: I would totally like to print them. We've got a forty-six or forty-eight page story, which is all in rough form, but it's pretty readable. We were thinking of making a mini-comic out of it. It's called *The Haunted Lake*, and it's pretty fun. I'd be happy to make a mini-comic out of that some day if I get the time. I'd really like to. Jon might steal some of the ideas back and use them in some other comic. That's fine too. I think we might have done two other twelve page stories from that, and I don't know, maybe they'll wind up in some mini-comic or something, but I'm not going to draw them. I drew like two or three pages from each and the rest were just roughs.

Jeff: Who would draw them if they were in a mini-comic?

Tom: Nobody would draw them. Either they get printed in a mini-comic as roughs, or they just sit in a box. But the Haunted Lake story is pretty fun, and it would make a nice little book. I'd like to do that one some day. The copy store down the street is having a two cent sale for the month of October. Maybe that's a good project for this month.

Jeff: Sounds like a good project.

Tom: It is. It was the first thing Jon and I did together. We just got together and threw out lots of stupid ideas and sort of wrestled a story out of them. There's a couple of plot holes, which I'm not really sure if Jon or I have acknowledged to each other,



an unpublished Tom Hart *Pitch Unger* page, worked up for Kodansha

(laughs) but it's still a fun story. It's about magic fish in a lake, that are tormented, and through a long ordeal, dealing with a library and monks in a monastary, Pitch realizes that these fish are the incarnated spirits of actors who were putting on a play thousands of years back. The lake was a big amphitheater, and there was a torrential flood, and for some reason the spirits became fish. I don't think that was ever well explained. (laughs) But anyway, the story was just way too much for them. But it's fun and it's got some great scenes towards the end with this fisherman's wife beating all these monks up with a rake. It's wonderful.

It was really great to do it with Jon. I learned a lot of things about the way we both work. It was a story that I would have told in about twenty pages, and he told it in forty. He did most of the layouts. He would sit there...so I know we're at point A and I know what point B is, and we just got to do it. So we'd show a panel of Pitch walking wherever he has to walk to, or whatever, but Jon's sitting there and thinking and sweating and he comes out with some sort of ridiculous joke that I never would have thought of, and then gets on with it. I never think that way. I never try to infuse jokes into certain scenes. I just want to move, you know? At that moment, I realized I gotta sit back and let Jon do this...I'll make a wreck of it if I get my hand in there...I'll just draw it.

Anyway, that's what we proposed to Kodansha about nine months ago and since then we've been reducing it and simplifying it, and giving it more space, and Jon is less and less inclined to be into it.

Jeff: But you think eventually something is going to happen?

Tom: Yeah. I'm putting a lot of weight into believing that at least within six months it will work out. Paul Pope is doing it, and David Mazzuchelli is making a lot of money that way...not a lot of money, but it would pay the rent, and that's nice.

Jeff: Is that why you're interested in doing work for a Japanese publisher, instead of being published in your own country? Because there's actually a potential for profit?

Tom: I think it's a bunch of things. I don't think that these are stories that I would necessarily be proud of as my finest work, but I'm really extremely happy to do it, as a chance to exercise a lot of things that I haven't been able to exercise. It would just be a way of continually doing comics and experimenting and playing. I'd love it to be seen in America, and if the whole thing happens, that's something that we're considering. But I'd never do it for Dark Horse, or something. Something about Japan is just so appealing to me, and I think their culture is just so crazy, and being a part of it, even if it's just creating things that people on their way from home to work will enjoy on the subway is a really pleasing idea to me. I doubt I would have done it in America. If it was three hundred dollars a page, I would do it as a children's book, if it was like Archie or Disney or something. I don't think I would do a Hutch Owen looking character, but I would do something like *that* for money in America, yeah.

Jeff: Are you partially into it because in Japan it would be read by millions of people, because so many more people read comics there than in this country?

Tom: It would be selling in the millions. I don't know...that's such a foreign idea to me. It's sort of an additional pleasing factor. I don't think I'm going to be saying anything that's important to communicate, or anything like that, but those millions of people might just be slightly more entertained than they would be had they not read our comic. So in this case, I don't think reaching a lot of people is a big deal. However, if it does do really well, they make these really nice collections out of them, and that I'm into.

I like the idea of making comics with some imposed restrictions, like all the things that the editors have been saying. I like that a lot, because I feel sort of resentful that I missed out on a good school for comics. For instance, *there is none*. And an opportunity to make comics at somebody else's will, and comics that I could still be proud of, is really exciting to me.

Jeff: So you feel you can learn from this process?

Tom: Exactly. And if I was just going to do my own stuff, for whatever American publisher, totally at my own impetus, like saying, "What comics should I make now?" I doubt I would have come up with these types of stories that the Japanese want, so it's exciting to do.

The Japanese comics audience thinks superheroes are really

a page from *The Haunted Lake* (read from right to left)

weird. It's cool.

Jeff: They *are* really weird.

Tom: (laughs) I know.

All this is only a possibility. I'm hoping it's a probability. Maybe in a couple of weeks I'll be able to tell you more, but I'm really excited to do it.

Jeff: If they do buy it, would it be a regular weekly, monthly or just occasional thing?

Tom: I think they would print it as often as I have twelve page stories done. They have a weekly comic and a monthly comic, and I like the monthly one a lot better. It has slightly more eccentric things in it. The weekly one is really mainstream. I think they're looking to get it into the weekly.

Jeff: What's the name of their comics?

Tom: The weekly one is called Morning and the monthly one is called Afternoon. Anyway they'd probably print a twelve page story once every month, or once every couple of months. I don't know. From what I hear Paul Pope has finished several stories, and he's not even going to appear until this winter.

Jeff: He's fast though...

Tom: Oh my God! He's a maniac. When I talked to him he said he'd done seventy pages that month, and had no plans on slowing down for another month or two. It's crazy.

So that whole question was about, "Do I have a job and am I making money off comics?" I'd love to be living off of my comics, but I don't need to be. I put a lot of work into them, and I'd like it to pay off some day. But, I don't have any faith in America at all.

Jeff: In the American comic book market place, or in America?

Tom: Well neither, but particularly the American comics marketplace.

Jeff: Faith in it for surviving for another five years, or being able to make a living from it?

Tom: I just don't see much in the audience (laughs). Or, I don't see much in the people who know about comics to make me want to make comics for them. I don't see much chance of making good comics and making a good living in America. It seems like only Peter Bagge or Dan Clowes can do that, and I can't do comics like they do.

I would give up if there weren't Japan, or maybe I wouldn't, but I probably would. Not comics completely, but I would give up the idea of making a career out of it, and I would try to find a good job and get computer skills, or whatever.

Jeff: Let's talk about the beginning of Tom Hart. When and where were you born?

Tom: 1969, in Kingston, New York, I was born. Two days and twenty-six years ago. Two days ago was my birthday.

Jeff: Yes, happy birthday Tom.

Tom: Thank you. And I grew up in Kingston, New York, or Port Ewen, New York, which is just outside of Kingston, most of my childhood. There's not much to tell. I didn't like it (laughs). I didn't like Kingston anyway, so I came to Seattle.

Jeff: When was that?

Tom: 1990. After a year of art school at SVA (the School of Visual Arts, New York City).

Jeff: What was that like? The usual?

Tom: Oh...I was a little kid and I wanted to learn comics, and there was Harvey Kurtzman, Art Spiegleman and Peter Kuper, who I knew of...and other guys, and it sounded great, but it wasn't. It was horrible. Aside from meeting Marc Arsenaut, Sam Henderson and some other people, and learning off of them and doing stuff with them, I wasn't very into SVA. I was mostly not into the other students. It seemed like everybody was from Long Island, and ecstatic to be away from their parents for the first time, so it was just booze, drugs, and The Cure all the time. All these things were new to me, by the way. I remember seeing all these Cure posters and I had no idea who they were. I liked their poster 'cause that greatest hits album had just come out, which has an old guy standing on the beach and it's a lovely poster. But, I didn't understand what the appeal of the music was.

Jeff: Did you take any classes with Kurtzman, Spiegleman or Kuper?

Tom: No. I dropped out at the end of the first year, and the first year is all basics, which is good, but for some reason I couldn't keep with it. Sam continued. He could tell you stories, I'm sure. I think Harvey was deteriorating a lot and Sarah, his assistant, was conducting his classes. And Eisner was there too, but I didn't take classes with any of those guys.

Jeff: So nothing...

Tom: So I quit and worked in a comic book store (laughs).

Jeff: In New York?

Tom: Yeah.

Jeff: Which store?

Tom: It's called It's A Strange Land, in Kingston. And I stupidly thought that just by having alternatives and comics in a store means you can sell them, but instead I drove the owner near bankruptcy, I think. Not all stores can sell alternatives and no one should believe it. If a store doesn't want to carry them, it should be completely allowed to not do so. Most people are banging on their doors demanding otherwise. I feel guilty about that store to this day. Sorry, Bruce!

Jeff: That you encouraged them to carry stuff that they hadn't before?

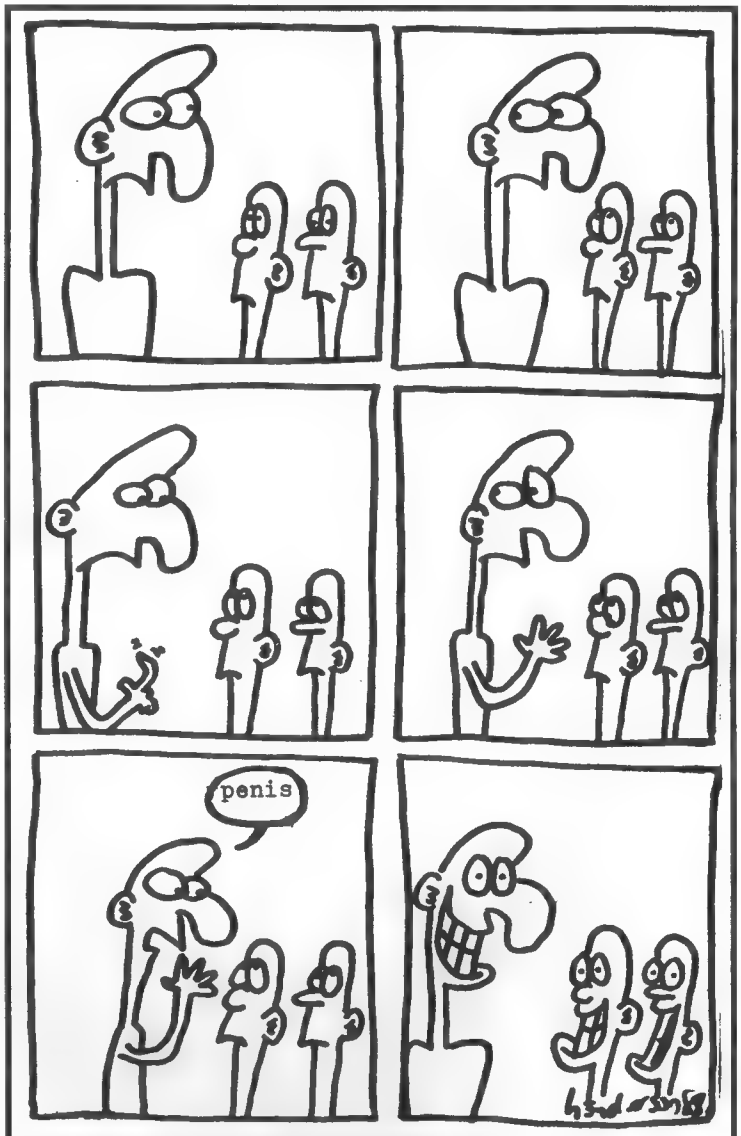
Tom: Yeah, and I was pretty much running the place and doing the orders and stuff. So any stupid anthology that Fantagraphics would do, I'd say, "Oh, cool. A new Fantagraphics anthology," and I'd order five, and none would sell. And I'm sure that's true of a bunch of other comics as well. I don't even know what ones. I think *Eightball* did okay, but I think that's just because I told all my friends to buy it when it came out, and it was "creepy." There are countless examples of me ordering three or five of something and it just being a big waste, which I apologize for.

Jeff: Do you think it's just because people in that area had absolutely no interest in those types of comics, or because those comics weren't actually any good, or..?

Tom: A mixture. I was so new to comics that I thought anything alternative was good, so it was easy to order bad comics, not knowing they were bad, but also the people in that area had no interest in good comics.

Jeff: What sparked your interest in comics? Did you grow up

reading them?
Tom: I grew up liking *Peanuts* a hell of a lot. I think that did it all. And reading *How To* cartooning books all through elementary school and junior high, and things like that. Aside from Archie's, which my friend had a four feet high stack of in his bathroom, and I think Richie Rich's too, I didn't read them at all until I was sixteen or seventeen, when this particular comic store moved into my area and opened up shop on the day of my senior prom. That day I walked through it, and I was so excited that there was a comic store. At that time *Maus* had come out, and I'd heard a lot about it and I was pretty excited by that. And I knew some cartoonists from all the *How To* books I'd been reading. I remember being excited about wanting to see Richard Corben.
Jeff: (laughs).
Tom: I know...it's because of this particular strip that I'd seen of his that was really neat, and I've still never seen the rest of it. It had no boobs or anything in it. It was just a crazy thing about a guy getting killed by a train, which was totally different than all the comic strips I'd been reading. So the day the store opened I walked through it, and headed...I think I'd discovered Vaughn Bode in a regular book store a couple of months prior. So when I walked through this store I said, "Oh, wow...a comic store," and I went straight for what I thought were what comics were, what people who went to comic stores bought, which were the black and white things. I passed a whole wall of Marvel and DC's. At the time, everyone was being revitalized, the Flash and Wonder Woman, and I saw all those comics and I thought, how cute that they still have some of those. And I thought, how nice of the store to display them as a sense of nostalgia or something. I had no idea it fueled the whole machine. It's gross. And I bought a lot of bad comics then too.
Jeff: So you got more into comics from the store opening there?
Tom: I'm trying to think if...These two events might have happened in either order, but at some point I read in Rolling Stone about Dark Knight, and was pretty into that too. It looked pretty cool. So I was at a flea market out of state, visiting some relatives, and a guy had them, so I bought all four in later printings, and got bags and boards for them. He also had a bunch of other comics, and I bought a *Cerebus*. I think I just bought a *Cerebus*, but I think it was a total toss up between *Cerebus* and *Fish Police*, both of which were entirely new to me...and I might have seen Turtles there. I'm sure I saw Turtles there. I'm pretty sure this happened just before the store opened, by maybe a month. And so I bought them and was into them. It was great. I was totally into them. *Cerebus* I went back for every month until pretty recently.
Jeff: What stopped you from going back for *Cerebus*?
Tom: It just got exhausting (laughs). I mean, I don't care if Dave Sim is a misogynist, but I do care if he's a raving incomprehensible lunatic, and it seems like in some ways he is. He's made the statement before about *Cerebus* that, "Once you leave you'll come back," and he's right. I'll read most everything he finishes at some point, but this one is just too crazy. He might be going senile, I can't tell. At some point I should read the whole thing and make some kind of judgement, but I just got tired.
Jeff: Are you more tired of him than the story?
Tom: No, the story is also tiring...
Jeff: (laughing) I have to admit, I haven't read a *Cerebus* in probably ten years...
Tom: Really? There were the issues that a lot of people found tiring that I actually liked...the whole death of Oscar Wilde story, whatever that guy's name was. I was into that, and it was really slow and a lot of people were giving up then, but I think this new one is just cracked. I don't know, he seems too into his own creation or something, I'm not sure. I'm not paying enough attention to really be able to tell you. I just got tired. I'll re-read it someday.
Jeff: Um...
Tom: But anyway, I ended up working at that comic store within a month after it opened.
Jeff: Was that like the summer after you graduated from school?
Tom: Uh-uh. I worked there during my senior year, up until it was time to leave for college. Then when I came back I ran the place. I kicked the present manager out cause I knew he was stealing, and I let it be known (laughs), and I took his job. It was terrible.
Jeff: So you got more into comics as you started working there and seeing different stuff?
Tom: Yeah. I worked there. I worked nights, and I just read comics. It was all surprising to me. I loved Glenn Dakin and the guys who were doing *Escape*. I loved *Escape*. I can't think of very much else. Renegade was really busy then, and they might have had a title or two worth looking at. Also *Watchman* had just come out and that was sort of exciting. *Love and Rockets* was out.
Jeff: You were into that too?
Tom: Yeah.
Jeff: And when did you start making your own comics?
Tom: It wasn't until that year of college, and Sam Henderson, whom I had met maybe a month before going to school...We



a one page Sam Henderson comic from *Tuna Casserole*

were going to the same school, and came to find out that we had the exact same schedule, so we saw each other every day, all day. At that point Sam had done maybe twenty-five mini-comics, since the age of fourteen. Crazy, crazy things, and it was totally inspiring, so I just wanted a piece of the "action." I felt that it was the right thing to do.

I remember the first book I did was just a series of eight really tiny doodles, and I worked so hard on making sure all the paste lines weren't showing, and things like that. I think I did four generations of it before I even considered a master, just so I could get rid of all the paste lines. I was really anal, and it was just eight doodles. It had a ridiculously long introduction (laughs). And since that, just various other mini-comics. Sam, Marc Arsenaut and I collaborated on *Tuna Casserole*.

Jeff: What was *Tuna Casserole*?

Tom: An anthology of junk. Some of it was good...the first couple of issues. Some of it was okay. I should mention that at that point, Marc Arsenaut was totally into the whole scratchy New York cartoonist look and had tons of this shit. Something in particular called *Funny Garbage*...and all this was new to me. I had never seen...the idea of homemade comics hadn't even occurred to me. Sometimes a friend and I drew them on pieces of paper, but the idea of making books out of them was totally new. So he had a lot of crazy angst-ridden things that I didn't connect with very well, but I was excited by the package and the format. So I had a long struggle with accepting the form, but not the content. Like, I couldn't do the types of stuff that I was seeing...the Gary Panter-inspired stuff. I was more Charles Schultz-inspired, but still I wanted to do some of those books.

Jeff: Was *Tuna Casserole* the start of Wow Cool, and were you guys distributing stuff?

Tom: No, it was just a publishing name, and Marc was aggressive, at least in ideal. He came up with the name, and we called it that and pretended like we ruled the world (laughs). And Marc still wants to and thinks it's possible, I think...

Jeff: To rule the world?

Tom: (laughs) Yeah. They had these big plans for what the particular method for ruling the world would be. Marc wanted to make a comic that would be a big monthly, like Japanese comics, just thick as hell, newsprint, maybe some articles and stuff. At that time it was a pretty radical idea. I'm sure a lot of people have thought about doing it now, but um...

Jeff: That was always something I used to dream about doing. I used to think, "Wouldn't it be great if there was a big fat comic of only good comics, and you could get a whole bunch of people to do it...."

Tom: I would contribute so gladly to that, I would probably drop whatever comic I was doing. So long as I could continue a project inside there. That's really exciting to me, to have it be a big community of work. I don't like solo books.

Jeff: If there was a way to make it support good work, so people could do it and explore and create stuff it would be so great...

Tom: But forget it. It's hopeless. You'd have to print a million copies to get any good rate, and what are you going to do with nine-hundred and ninety-five thousand copies of those things? Anyway, the mini-comic scene was pretty thriving at that moment too. SPCE and then Comics FX were both coming out about this time. SPCE was ending and Comics FX was beginning.

Jeff: What were those?

Tom: Basically Factsheet 5 type publications, but only for mini-comics. There were that many out there at that time that warranted these publications, and that was really exciting. I remember looking over those voraciously, and ordering, and just getting really excited by all those. The first and only mini-comic anthology I was accepted to, I was thrilled by. I did a ridiculous two page story and they bought it, and God, that made me so happy (laughs). I think that book had a ridiculous cover of Jimi Hendrix and he was probably fucking some broad or something (laughs). No, it wasn't that bad...

Jeff: Were the mini-comics people were doing back then selling a lot?

Tom: It seemed to me there was a big scene. Bigger than now...there's no publication now supporting it. Yeah. This was when Matt Feazel was really at his peak and there were just a lot of people doing mini-comics and trading them around. And Sam was king of it...nah, he was second string of five or six strings, he was pretty high...everyone in the mini-comics world knew him. But all those people sort of stopped doing comics, except like, Jeff Nicholson, who's still around...I can't remember a lot of the names, but there was some great stuff. Ted Bolman. He was great, like Dr. Seuss mixed with, it's stupid to say "mixed with" anything, but he was fantastical. He had a crazy imagination

NAUGACOMICS #214 10/29/86
HOUSEBOAT ON THE STYX PART 33
ALRIGHT, YOUR FIENDISHNESS! WE WILL NOW DANCE THE DANCE OF THE NINE BOXES OF REYNOLD'S WRAP, SEVEN VEILS, SIX BOXES OF QUISP, TWO OBOES, A TARSIER WITH A BACHELOR'S DEGREE IN WAITERING AND BEAN DIP!
(THE DANCE!)
TRA LA!
DIDDLY DEE!
QUISP
OOPS!
WHOAH!
QUISP
QUISP
THAT WAS NO DANCE - AND YOU ARE NOT JINGELINE AND JUMBLEFIG, BUT IMPOSTERS! GUARDS! SEIZE THEM!
QUISP
NEXT: CAPTURED!

a comic by Ted Bolman

that just wouldn't stop.

Jeff: Do you know what area he lived in?

Tom: He lived in Arizona, and travelled between Arizona and Massachusetts, I think. If I'm not mistaken, he was an heir to the Parker Bros. money, and just travelled around on that money. He did pretty great comics, especially when he kept them small. I didn't like his big comics so much, but some people did.

After quitting school and being home managing that store, I still drew comics and sent them out to all those people, or a few of the people, and tried to stay in touch with them.

Jeff: What comics were you doing then?

Tom: That's a good question. I was contributing to *Tuna Casserole*, and I was doing a book called *Art and Offerings*, which was just little eight page tiny things, but I was excited to do them. Every time I did one it was an event, and maybe I only did five (laughs) but it was really a struggle for me. I can't remember if there were any others. There might have been others. I remember when I got ahold of rubber stamps I made a whole rubber stamp book. I'm sure that was only eight pages too. I would get that minimum down, and then I would gleefully run to the xerox machine.

Jeff: Do you remember what your rubber stamp book was called?

Tom: That was called *Barbeque Sunspots*. This is embarrassing.

Jeff: Why is it embarrassing?

Tom: 'Cause they were ridiculous little...entirely fruity, frighteningly fruity...

Jeff: But you enjoyed making them.

Tom: Yeah, I enjoyed them. I was a fruit!

Jeff: (laughs). So in 1990, what made you decide to move out to Seattle?

Tom: Home was unbearable, at least Kingston was. I needed to be in a big city, I needed some culture, like I'd only tasted in New York City. Fantagraphics was out there. Some cartoonists were out there. Jon Lewis had just moved out there, and we'd been writing through the mail, and I had relatives in a suburb that would put me up, so me and my girlfriend at the time, moved out there. I was ready. I was excited. I thought maybe I'd work in the Fantagraphics warehouse if I could get the courage up to ask them for a job.

Jeff: Did you?

Tom: No. It's a weird place, I've been in that warehouse...

Jeff: And what did you think of Seattle once you got there?

Tom: It was great! It was a big city. The buses were good. I could move around. The rent was affordable. It was just new, big, and it wasn't completely intimidating like New York. It was doable. So after a couple of months I found a job at another comic store, and Trina, whom I was living with, found a job at a toy store, which was where she was working in Kingston, and it was like we'd never moved (laughs). We had the same jobs, except that we were both away from home really for the first time, and enjoying and experiencing a big city for the first time.

Jeff: What comic book store were you working at?

Tom: It was called Zanadu Comics. It's a pretty good store.

Jeff: Is it still around?

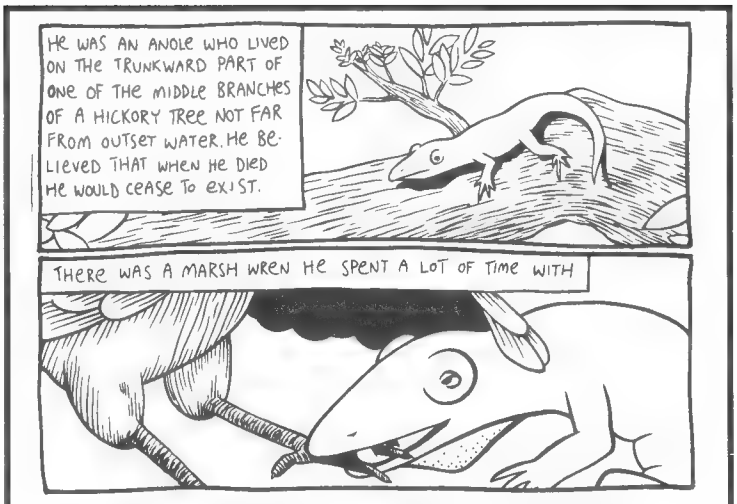
Tom: Yeah. They do a good job. They carry everything, so they'll carry any alternative. I don't think that carrying everything is necessarily a good policy, especially nowadays, but it's better than not carrying any alternatives, or only the one that you choose, based entirely on whim.

Jeff: Do you feel that moving across the country changed your life or that things pretty much stayed the same?

Tom: No, it was the best thing for me.

Jeff: Even though you were doing the same job...

Tom: Yeah, 'cause it was different. I was living with Trina, which


HE WAS AN ANOLE WHO LIVED ON THE TRUNKWARD PART OF ONE OF THE MIDDLE BRANCHES OF A HICKORY TREE NOT FAR FROM OUTSET WATER. HE BELIEVED THAT WHEN HE DIED HE WOULD CEASE TO EXIST.
THERE WAS A MARSH WREN HE SPENT A LOT OF TIME WITH

two panels by Jon Lewis from *True Swamp* #5

was hard, but a real experience rather than still essentially being high-schoolers. Good movies came to town and there were libraries and busses, and I could move and bike, and just experience a whole new world. It was really good for me. There were parties, and I'd never went to parties. And there was Jon, and he had read a million books and I wanted to know about all of them. And he was still doing mini-comics and I was too, and I wanted to make them better. I wanted to sit down and really attack it. To do a comic like I hadn't done before...a good one. I don't know if that happened or not.

So I did a sixteen page mini-comic which is also ridiculously embarrassing, but I thought I was conquering the world for those sixteen pages.

Jeff: What was that one called?

Tom: That was *Prince Fredrick's Feet*. A silly little fable, like every following book I'd suppose. But boy, I thought I'd opened the floodgates on that one. I don't know where my head is at half the time.

Jeff: You said there were a lot of good movie theaters. What kind of movies were you into?

Tom: The repertory theater was really exciting to me. That was something I'd never seen or had. Of course, in New York City there were plenty, but I hardly went. Anything if it was foreign, for God's sake. I just wanted to fill my brain up with that stuff.

Jeff: And did you really get into reading books too then, or had you been...

Tom: No, I still relied on other people to tell me what they were about (laughs). I was still too cranky. The Gulf War was going on...I was frustrated...I was working...when I work full time I get really irritable, and I was working full-time, so I didn't have much time to read; especially because I always had comics to make, which is the most important thing in the universe, so I was always trying to do them in the few hours I could capture outside of work. For some reason I still can't find the time to really read. I always feel like, "I'm not using this time doing comics, what's wrong with me?" That's an embarrassing, stupid trait.

Jeff: It surprised me that you mentioned the Gulf War, because it seems to me like a lot of people have already forgotten it, as if it never happened. I wonder how you relate to current events. Do you pay attention to them, or feel they don't affect your life very much?

Tom: I think at that time I was just starting to awaken to how the world and the country operated. So I was reading all sorts of left-wing magazines. I was reading those far more than I was reading books. *The Nation*, *Z*, and *Mother Jones*. I was just trying to understand things. And I was getting angrier and angrier, and

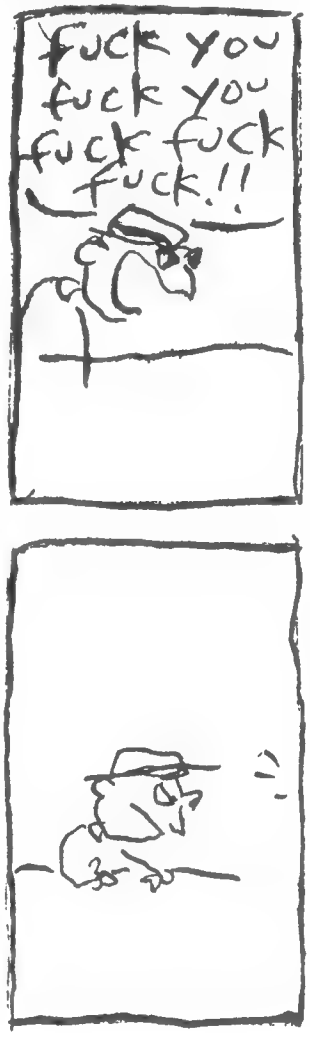
more and more Hutch Owen like. I thought the Gulf War was ridiculous, and it frightened me.

Jeff: Why did it frighten you?

Tom: I just couldn't believe it. I couldn't believe it was really happening. Now it seems like that was just a little baby step. Now it seems like we amass troops everyday. "Big deal, whatever."

Jeff: Did you have trouble believing it because you felt that this country, or society, had progressed beyond the point where they would reduce things to that stupid of a level of action?

Tom: Yeah. That pretty much does it. Every Saturday morning I would wake up and listen to *Mind Over Matters*, which was a show on the local university station. It was always just somebody speaking about the state of the country, what was "really going on." Noam Chomsky was on it a lot. And I tried to listen to that every week. Even sometimes going in to work and turning it on while I'm vacuuming and getting the store ready, I've got that on full blast so I can hear it. I suppose you could say I wanted to be an activist. I wanted to be a part of changing all those things, I think largely because I felt I'd been given a raw deal, and it didn't have to be that way. For instance, finding work was often hard, and I had no idea how to find a job. Every time I ever found a job, it was by luck. I'd felt like school didn't teach me a thing. And I felt like I understood that these things could be changed. We could have good schools, and we could have an educated population. We could have a world where better ideals were taught. So I just got crankier and crankier, and more and more frustrated by it. That's when I did *The Angry Criminal.*



Jeff: That's a pretty frustrated and angry book.

Tom: (laughs) Yeah, I think it's really charming. I like that book.

Jeff: Do you feel that by drawing a comic like *The Angry Criminal* that you were able to release some of that frustration that you were feeling at that time?

Tom: Only a little (laughs). But I think with *Hutch Owen* I released a lot more. I became a lot calmer. A lot more able to deal.

Jeff: Did *Hutch Owen* come out of those same feelings and times?

Tom: Yeah, absolutely. In fact, I did a lot of rereading of notebooks from that period to do *Hutch Owen*.

Jeff: But you did a bunch of other mini-comics between *The Angry Criminal* and *Hutch Owen*, right?

Tom: I think I only did *Wodaabe*. Which was just a couple dreams and a little autobiographical fantasy and one gag strip. I kept wanting to do an ongoing book. I knew so many people that did. "Oh, here's the knew issue of *Captain Spaz*, or here's the new issue of whatever," so *Wodaabe* was an attempt at that, and sort of as a present for Julie Doucet who was moving to town at that time. I thought I would do a lot of them and I only did one. *New Hat* was that way too. When I started *New Hat*, I thought, "Oh, I'm going to do a thousand of these. I'll do them every couple of months," and I did *one*.

Jeff: I think it's neat that each of your comics seems to be self-contained. There's no number one, number two, number three. It's more like, here's a thing...

Tom: Yeah. That's pretty important to me, I think.

Jeff: And they're all, each one...

Tom: They all have a little uniqueness to them?

Jeff: They stand apart. They're either different size, or the colors, or the stories...the whole way it goes together as a package, from the content to the thing that you hold in your hand...for me they're neat. They're more precious than say, if I were to pick up eight issues of Eightball or something that's more mass-produced.

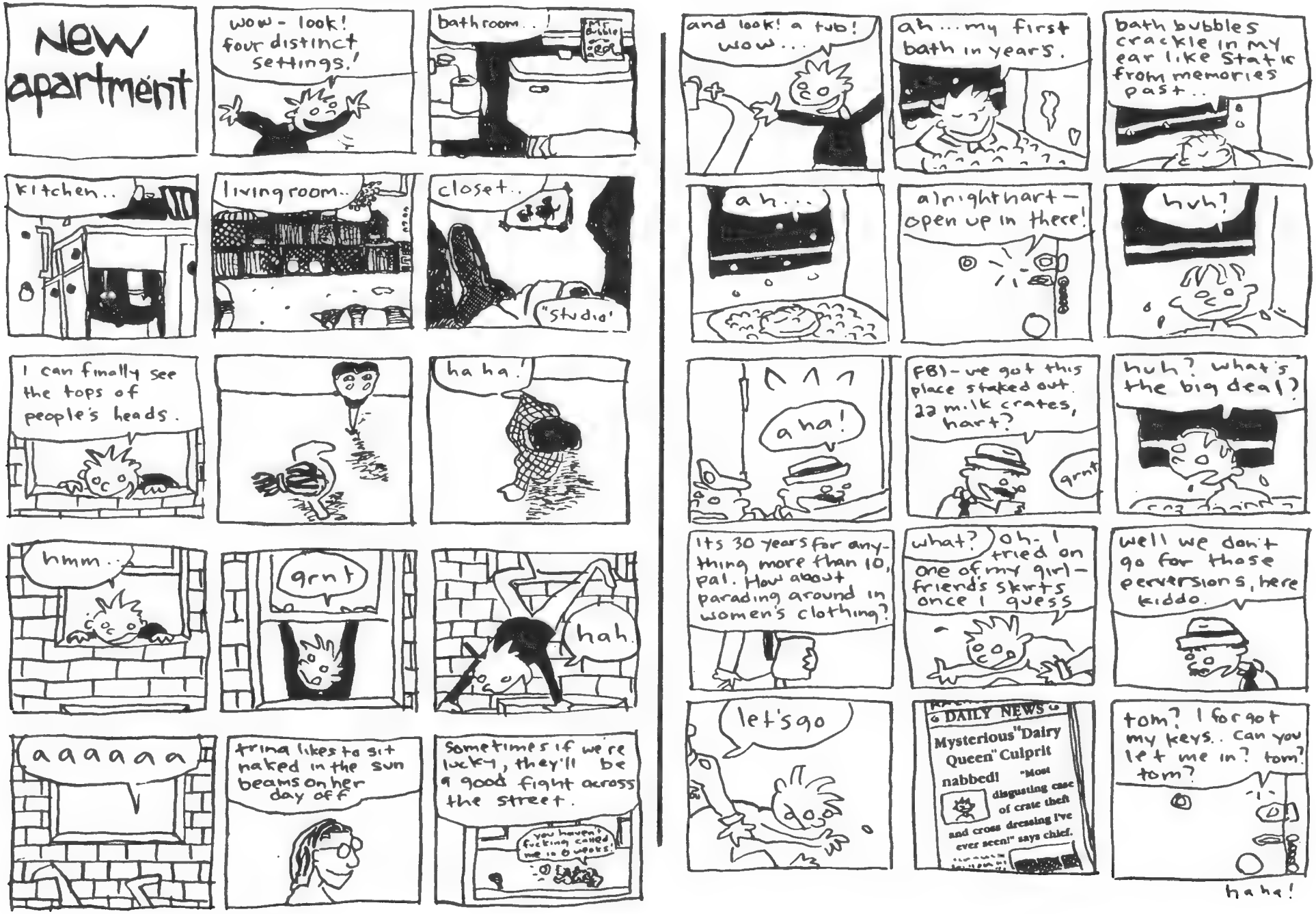
Tom: That's very pleasing to hear.

Jeff: Because of the quality, because they were mostly made by hand, it makes me feel special to have them. It's more than just the content, but also they way they're put together. Like Wodabe has belly button lint...it's neat.

Tom: That's good to hear. I think objects in the world are wonderful things, and a comic book is an object as much as a teapot, and you should try to make it as much its own entity as you can.

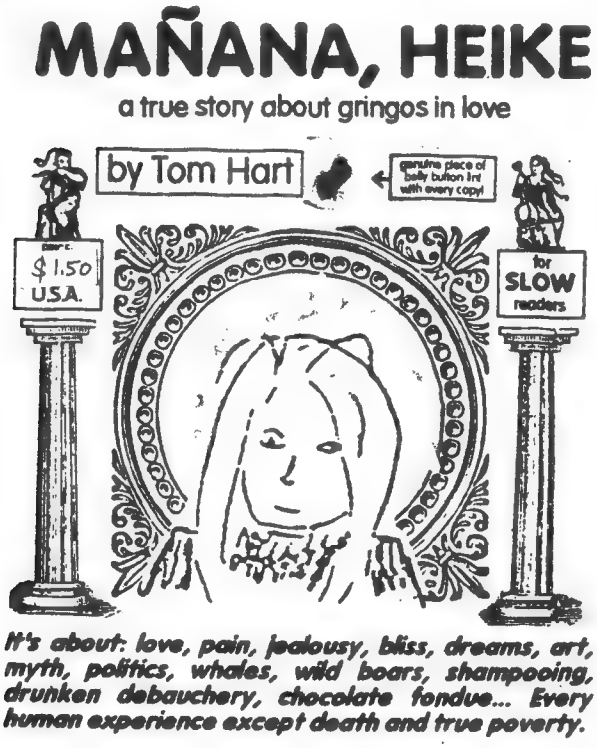
I try to make them slightly unique. I hate comic books...I've resisted comic book size for so long, mainly because I think some amount of uniqueness or fresh interpretation of what's currently being done is really important.

Jeff: I wanted to ask you about


new apartment
wow - look! four distinct settings!
bathroom..
kitchen..
living room..
closet..
"studio"
I can finally see the tops of people's heads.
ha ha!
hmm..
grnt
hah
aaaaaa
trina likes to sit naked in the sun beams on her day off
Sometimes if we're lucky, they'll be a good fight across the street.
you haven't fucking called me in 6 weeks!
and look! a tub! wow...
ah... my first bath in years.
bath bubbles crackle in my ear like static from memories past...
ah...
alright hart — open up in there!
huh?
aha!
FBI - we got this place staked out. 22 milk crates, hart?
grnt
huh? what's the big deal?
Its 30 years for anything more than 10, pal. How about parading around in women's clothing?
what? oh. I tried on one of my girlfriend's skirts once I guess
well we don't go for those perversions, here kiddo.
let's go
DAILY NEWS
Mysterious "Dairy Queen" Culprit nabbed! "Most disgusting case of crate theft and cross dressing I've ever seen!" says chief.
tom? I forgot my keys.. Can you let me in? tom? tom?
haha!

a two page comic from *Wodaabe Comics* by Tom Hart

one of your things called *Manana, Heike*. It's a mini-zine, or something like that. Is that the only zine you've done?
Tom: It's a zine I suppose.
Jeff: Well, it's words and not drawings.


MAÑANA, HEIKE
a true story about gringos in love
by Tom Hart
genuine piece of baby button lint with every copy!
$1.50 USA.
for SLOW readers
It's about: love, pain, jealousy, bliss, dreams, art, myth, politics, whales, wild boars, shampooing, drunken debauchery, chocolate fondue... Every human experience except death and true poverty.

Tom: It's just a travelogue. Yeah. It's just a forty page tiny book explaining a Green Tortoise trip that I had, which I thought was uniquely worth telling, because it was so filled with real, almost mythological-like patterns to it. Plus for some reason I just have to spill out onto a page in some manner, and I just wasn't very into comics then, so I just typed this thing up in a big frenzy, and sold it, and I apologize to everybody for that (laughs).
Jeff: Did it affect you differently to do something without pictures?
Tom: It didn't really feel that different. It just felt like the next publication, the next mini-comic, even though it wasn't a mini-comic.

I just wanted to...God knows what that was (laughs). Sort of another cry for help and a thank you to the world, which I guess most of my other books up to that point had been, just in a different way. Because it was real and it was really intense, and I don't think the idea of drawing it ever occurred to me. It was just supposed to be a little zine. Now that I remember, I was really inspired by *Cometbus*. Particularly the first text-only one that he had done, which just knocked me out. I loved it. Which I lost my copy of, by the way.
Jeff: Do you think you might do more things like that in the future?
Tom: Yeah, I need to do more writing of some kind. I think I felt like I needed to lose a little of my ego for a while, though, and not be so wrapped up in what was happening to me, and what I was doing, and so the idea of autobiography started to sour on me. But maybe someday it'll come back. I think it would be nice if it does, and if I decide that the events of my life are worth examining and just rerouting and externalizing in a different way. But right now I sort of avoid that. I think I worried that I was becoming too self-centered and too wrapped up in my own head and my own problems, and I just wanted to do some other things for a while.
Jeff: It's hard to tell in your earlier mini-comics if they're auto-

Our friend, Tom

hey lets go see Tom
the bum?
well he's sort of a bum but he's cool.
yeah I met him once
it was weird. he played with his dick the whole time
yeah he does that. he always talks about his dick, too or yours — doesn't matter
sounds creepy
he's cool though
how'd he get so messed up?
I dunno

biographical or if they're fiction, or just fun or kind of pretend autobiographical, because a lot of the time the character's name is Tom, but he'll be an old man or something...
Tom: (laughs) That's intentional. I don't think I've done autobiography in comics. I think every one has been sort of a fantasy autobiography, like Julie Doucet does a lot, but I never wanted to explain it. I always like the idea that it could be true.
Jeff: Did you feel that moving to Seattle, where there were a lot of cartoonists and a lot of activity, was that scene an influence on you, or is the scene just a myth?
Tom: Um...Jon Lewis was a major influence on me and was really the only person among them that I really communicated with. I saw Mark Campos now and then. I think that it was exciting to know that other people were doing these things, and sort of being in touch with them, but I don't know how influential it was. Just the fact that you could talk to Jim Woodring if maybe you saw him, it was pretty exciting, and maybe it drove me a little more, but aside from that, at least at first, only Jon was influential at all. Until I came back and did Hutch...
Jeff: What do you mean by *you came back*?
Tom: I left town for around five months. That's when I did *Manana Heike*, and I never thought I'd draw again...or didn't care to or something. But I came back and saw Jon going for the Xeric grant and really digging his heels, and doing True Swamp and that was really inspiring. Ed Brubaker had moved to town by then, and he was pretty inspiring. It wasn't until '93 that things started influencing me in a major way.
Jeff: In what way did they inspire and influence you?
Tom: We all had similar goals. We wanted to make good comics. We loved good comics and we wanted to make more of them. It was really fun when we'd sit in the same room and draw and just

keep the other one abreast of what we were doing and what we were thinking about. That was wonderful. For a while before I left, Ed and Jon and I were living at the same place, but I was too freaked out to pay much attention. I was breaking up with Trina, and it was really hard, but when I got back I was more ready to be settled down, and we were just like a little gross threesome (laughs) for a couple months of cartooning. Wanting to be the new thing.

Jeff: Let me see if I got this straight now...You moved to Seattle in '90 with your girlfriend from New York, moved in together, it was difficult, and then broke up and you took off for five months, wandered around, went down to Mexico, different places, then ended up coming back to Seattle recharged and ready to draw, and you started on *Hutch Owen* then?

Tom: Jeez. That seems to be it. I think one major factor is that in those travels I went to visit Marc Arsenaut at the Tundra headquarters and I read an advance copy of *Understanding Comics* and that really knocked me out. It is probably solely responsible, aside from the effects of wandering around and not caring for a while, the only other major factor involved in recharging me, as you say. That book was really important. It was great to read. I think up to that point, I'd given up on the idea that there could be intellectual stimulation or challenge in making comics, and I figured I didn't want any more of it. Then I read that and I felt, "Okay, I can do this."

Jeff: So you came back and started working on *Hutch Owen*. Where did those ideas come from?

Tom: It was just the only thing in my head at the time. Not the only thing, as if there was nothing in my head but this, but it was just entirely, overwhelmingly in my head, so I needed to get it out. If I was going to make a comic as I said I was, and I sort of set myself the goal of making a good substantial comic, that was the only thing I knew, all this crazy overwhelming intense stuff, so that's where it came from, I guess.

Jeff: Because it seems like a big step from your mini-comics where most of your stories weren't very long, eight pages, twelve pages, two pages, to doing a story that was fifty or so pages long, and much more structural and complex...

Tom: Yeah, all due to Jon and Ed to a degree, and *Understanding Comics*. I think I was too freaked out about comics up to that point. I didn't understand anything about them, but decided to try anyway. That's the best way to learn.

a panel from Lowlife by Ed Brubaker

Jeff: What were the print runs and circulation on the different mini-comics you did usually?

Tom: I don't know. Maybe there's a hundred, or a couple hundred of each one out there. Maybe less than a hundred. I would generally print up fifty, maybe twenty-five, whatever I could afford. I'd send out twenty of them and then just print up ten any time I had money, anytime I got a review or a request for them.

Jeff: Was receiving the Xeric award essential in making *Hutch Owen* become what it was?

Tom: Yeah. I think I shouldn't undervalue the fact of having a grant foundation there as a sort of obliquely official sort of approval. I learned about it and then I realized that this would

YOU KNOW- WHEN MY DAD AND I SAW THAT T.V. SPOT ABOUT YOU, HE KEPT SAYING THAT YOU WERE JUST A LAZY BUM AND YOU'D NEVER WORK A DAY IN YOUR LIFE.
WELL FUCK THAT. YOUR DAD'S AN ASSHOLE. THERE'S NOTHING MORE IMPORTANT OR BEAUTIFUL THAN A MAN WORKING HARD. IT'S HIS MOST PRIMAL URGE...
TO DISCOVER AND FEEL HIS PLACE IN THE PROGRESS AND MAINTENENCE OF HIS COMMUNITY- IT'S THE BASE OF A MAN'S NEEDS. IT MAKES US FEEL GOOD TO DO WORK.
THAT WE'RE NOT ALLOWED THIS SIMPLE NEED MAKES SOME OF US "BUMS," "NIGGERS," KILLERS, ADDICTS
THAT I HAVE HOPES AND ASPIRATIONS FOR MY FELLOW MAN MAKES ME A SUBVERSIVE. I WANT TO SEE MANKIND FLOURISH- I'M FORCED TO REBEL. SO I DESTROY THINGS, CLEAR THE WAY FOR WHAT'S NEXT. MAKE SPACE FOR THE REVOLUTION TO COME...
YOU COULD SAY THAT THERE'S NO ROOM NOW FOR REVOLUTION CAUSE IT'S ALL PRIVATE PROPERTY! HA!!
THERE'S MUCH THAT NEEDS TO BE DONE.
HERE- LOOK AT THIS.
WHAT IS IT- A PUPPET?
DENNIS WORNER PUPPET- I'VE GOT A BIT OF A STAGE SHOW PLANNED FOR TOMORROW.
RARARA- HELLO LITTLE BOY!!

be a really great thing. It would make me feel good to get. It would be like a psychological grant to keep going and making comics, and it would also be a financial grant to print the damn thing up.

Jeff: Had you pretty much finished the work when you applied for the grant?

Tom: No, I was halfway through it, maybe three quarters.

Jeff: At that point were you aiming for the grant, or how did you think you were going to publish or release it?

Tom: I did it specifically for the grant. I said, okay I'll do this and I'll go for the grant in July. It worked out that I went for it in the following January. I would have figured something out. I was too determined at that point. It would have been a big blow, had I not gotten it, but I'm sure I would have figured out something to publish it. But they awarded me some money for the damn thing, so I printed it up.

Jeff: And you dealt with distributing it yourself?

Tom: Yeah, I find all that bit miserable.

Jeff: How many copies did you print up?

Tom: I printed four thousand, and I've sold about twelve or thirteen hundred so far.

Jeff: Really, that's it?

Tom: Yeah there's a lot of copies left.

Jeff: I would have thought that you'd sold a lot more than that.

Tom: The initial orders were pretty low, largely due to Capitol calling it a mini-comic and not giving it a very good display, but

once they saw it they re-solicited it. I'm not sure what the orders were but they were substantially better, but still the total is only about twelve hundred. But I feel like it will still sell.

Jeff: I'm sure it will continue to sell. There's no reason it should slow down or stop.

Tom: Unless the world suddenly changes and Hutch Owen is no longer necessary.

Jeff: How long has it been since you finished *Hutch Owen*? Two years?

Tom: It came out in the summer of '94, so...a year and a half, or whatever.

Jeff: How do you feel about it now?

Tom: I feel like apologizing for that one too (laughs). I feel like it was largely therapeutic and cathartic. Objectively, I think it's entertaining, but at least now, it's not the kind of comics I want to make. I think it was really important for me to do, for a number of reasons. It was important to get all that stuff out of my head, and in a way it was giving myself permission to continue to feel good about the world and continue making comics, and it was good that I set myself a goal and actually accomplished it. It was pretty much like aping all the comics that I'd seen up to that point, specifically the things that Jon had been working on. So it was good to learn those things. I think it was a real big jump start for me, but I would make it a lot differently today. I'm glad people like it.

Jeff: You said that since you made it, you're not as angry and as bitter as you once were...

Tom: Yeah, I'm a little more subtle...only a little. And calmer. But

MY FAVORITE WAS RUTGER HAO.
HE WAS A PUSSY.
I WAS A PUSSY, TOO.
BALLS
NO BALLS
I WAS A PUSSY TIL I TOOK UP THE STICK! - TIL I TOOK ON THE TASK!!
EXHALED THE INACTION!!
WENT FORWARD
WENT FORWARD-MUCHO KICKASS!

not so coincidentally, I've also stopped reading *Mother Jones* and *The Nation*, and stopped listening to radio shows, 'cause it just got exhausting and overwhelming, because I felt like I couldn't do anything besides canvassing door to door for environmental organizations, which I don't want to do.

Jeff: You don't want to do it because...

Tom: Because I'm a self-centered art jerk (laughs).

Jeff: Is it that you think it's too time consuming and you could use your energy more constructively in other ways, or that you'd rather have your energy for your own issues?

Tom: Yeah, that's a fine way to phrase it. I think I want to stay withdrawn for a while. At some point, maybe soon, maybe not, I'll be interested in issues of the world, not that I'm disinterested but just that I'm not actively interested. I won't do much aside from voting and signing petitions, and I try to stay informed. But the time I wanted to change the world has passed, and maybe I'll feel like I can contribute, but not now. I just want to make nice things for nice people (laughs) for a while.

Jeff: It seems like the three comics I've seen of yours since *Hutch Owen* have been much less structured, especially the two twenty-four hour comics. Is that a conscious reaction against *Hutch Owen*?

Tom: Yeah...I think *New Hat* was far more conscious a reaction than the other two, but I think I have a really short attention span, and I think I also have a very low tolerance for the way things are commonly done in any situation. I tried to do *Hutch* the way things are done, as much as possible, and I guess I'm tired of it. I wanted to try to do things differently, even if I didn't know what that meant. Structurally, I wanted to lose that whole pattern. It's sort of a given the way stories are structured, it seems like. There's a very Hollywood formula that's ingrained in us, I think, that involves a climax at the end and things like that.

Jeff: While I don't think that *New Hat* works as well, or is anywhere near as entertaining or as successful as *Hutch Owen* was, I appreciate it more in some ways, because I think it tried to reach farther. I don't know if that offends you...

Tom: Oh no. You can say anything you want. I already read your review (laughs) and that's fine. Um...Thanks. I'm glad that it was at least worth appreciating on that level. It's hard to say, but I think I enjoy New Hat more as an entertaining read, and I hope that some people will.

Jeff: What do you feel like reactions have been so far on *New Hat*?

Tom: I don't know. I haven't gotten very much reaction, but most of it has been positive. I'm not sure I can really answer that, and I don't know why not. The reaction seems sort of positive...I'm just not really sure right now.

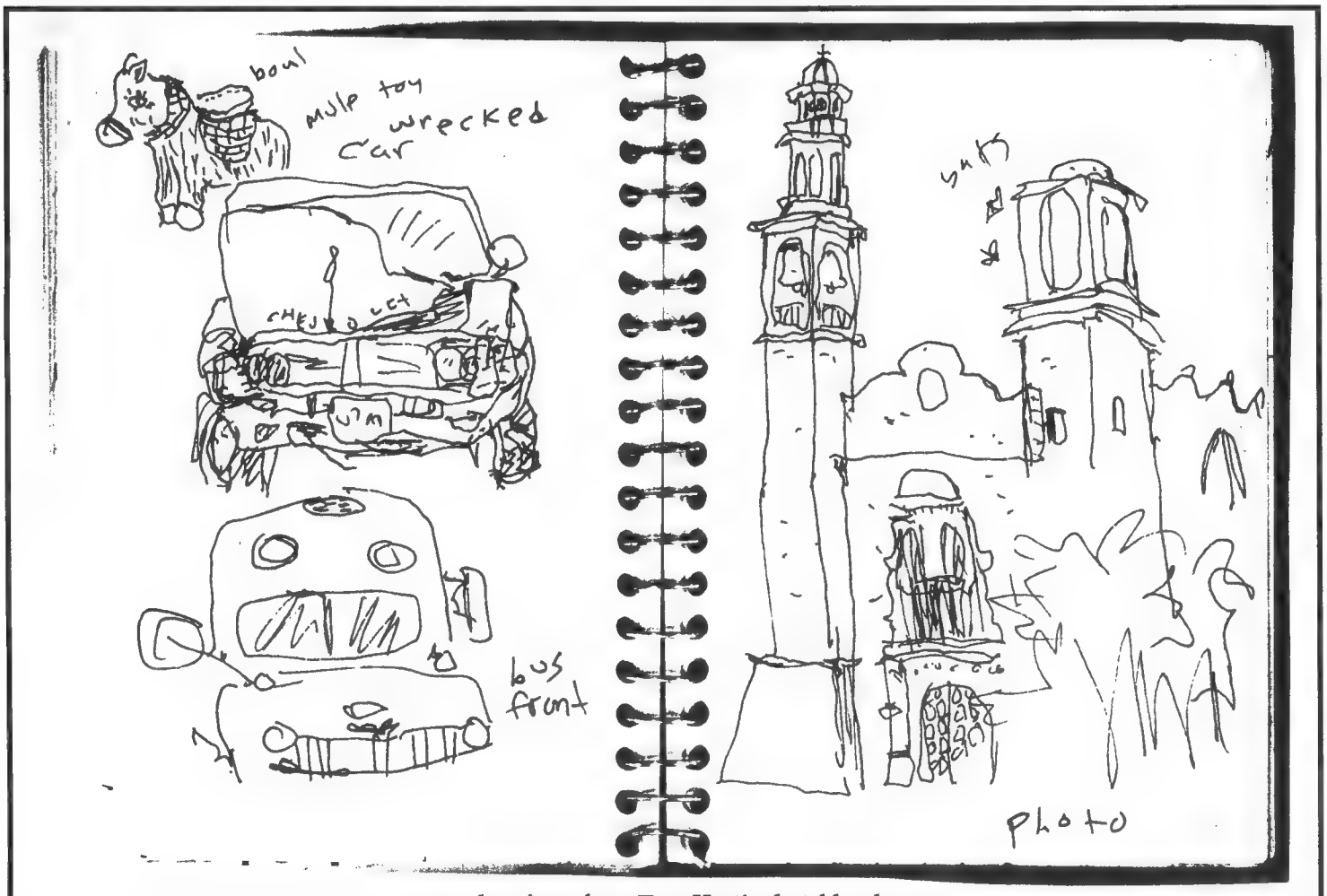
Jeff: How is it different this time, since you hooked up with Black Eye Press?

Tom: It's been good. Michel Vrana, the publisher, is really a great guy, and willing to put a lot of energy into the thing. I'm very grateful to not have to deal with all that business stuff right now. I'm sure there will be a point where I'll want to self-publish again, and I'll find it fun, but right now I just want to stay drawing, and all that business and marketing stuff is really draining and exhausting.

Jeff: Did you do a little

better with the distributors since you had a publisher?
Tom: Sales-wise?
Jeff: Yeah.
Tom: I think we sold about the same on initial orders only, which seems like it is better. I think we sold thirteen hundred copies which is more than *Hutch Owen* sold, all total over a year and a half. So yeah, it went well. I'm sure Black Eye had a lot to do with that. I'm grateful for that.
Jeff: You said before that *New Hat* was kind of a reaction to *Hutch Owen*, can you explain that a little more, or am I misquoting you?
Tom: No, I feel that's sort of true. *Hutch* was so agonizing to do, once I'd finished the rough draft...which wasn't very rough...it was only rough in the execution of the drawings, but everything else was pretty much how it is now. So it was a lot of time drawing something that I'd already written, and I grew really exhausted from that. During *Hutch*, I drew the first story of *New Hat*, towards the end of *Hutch*, and it was the total antithesis to *Hutch Owen*. It was some sort of part of me that was not getting its voice saying, "Strike me down! This is a ridiculous way to work." That's an extreme way to put it, but I definitely think that it was a part of me that I needed to give voice to during drawing *Hutch*, which for some reason took forever, even though it doesn't show. I'm really slow. The whole format of *New Hat* was definitely a reaction to it, 'cause I wanted it to be less of a linear thing, and I wanted it to more like circle in on itself, and be more interactive, and less like a dictionary, or less like a book of nonfiction, like this is the story and I want you to come away with these reactions. Rather, with *New Hat* I was hoping it to be more curious, more open, more available to different reactions.

Did I ever tell you that I think *Hutch Owen* is just a combination of *Prince Fredrick's Feet* and the *Angry Criminal*?
Jeff: Uh...no (laughs).
Tom: (laughs) It's got a parade, it's got an angry criminal...same thing. And I think *New Hat* is sort of a reworking of *Hutch Owen* too. The president is nothing but the little boy. The poet who is killed is largely *Hutch Owen*, just in a crankier version. The cavemen are the business guys. That's probably true of my next book as well.
Jeff: You've got a unique drawing style. Why do you draw the way you do?
Tom: I draw because I traced Charles Schultz, and every time I draw a forearm, which is probably my favorite part of the body to draw, it's just right out of *Peanuts*. I like those drawings (laughs). It's how I've come to draw. I grew up on comic strips, so I was always more comic strippy. I read a lot of *How To Cartoon* books as a kid, and they were often by cartoon strip people, and that's how I learned, and that's what I grew up emulating. I remember in particular one book, which I think was written by an English fellow...I don't remember his name (I'd like to get all these books again someday), but I remember him saying that hands were just four bananas, and I still draw four bananas (laughs), and I draw Charles Schultz's forearms.
Jeff: Do you feel that your art has changed from *Hutch Owen* to *New Hat*?
Tom: Yeah...it's definitely gotten better. I still need to calm down and learn to see the real world and be able to draw it, but it's absolutely improved. I'm more confident in drawing things that aren't people freaking out, which is largely what *Hutch Owen* is, fifty-some pages of people freaking out. I think I need to still get



drawings from Tom Hart's sketchbook

even more simple, but I need to learn more things, but more simply as well.

Jeff: Do you mostly learn from drawing comics, or do you sketch and practice drawing?

Tom: I sketch. It changes from day to day. Sometime I'll even carry a sketchbook around my neck. I've been doing that the past couple of days. Sometime I sketch buildings, and I love drawing gestures of people. I don't think I practice enough with the pen and the ink that I draw comics with, and I need to find a way to practice that more.

Jeff: What kind of pen do you use?

Tom: A nib pen. Some loose thing. I might have used the same pen for *Hutch Owen* and *New Hat*, but I think I used one for each book, which is stupid, because you're supposed to throw a pen out after a handful of pages. I know Dave Sim draws a page and a half with a nib and then throws it away, and I drew fifty-six pages with mine (laughs).

Jeff: What size do you draw at?

Tom: I drew *New Hat* to scale. *Hutch Owen* I drew a little bigger. I think I need to draw the next book bigger. I think *New Hat* was sort of cluttered.

Jeff: You drew it the actual size it was printed at?

Tom: Yeah.

I need to definitely learn how to draw better, but I'm also willing to take it slowly. Every once in a while, I get frustrated that I'm not these Japanese cartoonists that I see, that do these wonderfully lush drawings of towns and foliage, and they'll have these really cartoony characters on top of all this detailed work, and I get frustrated that I can't do that.

Jeff: Of course a lot of those cartoonists have whole studios of assistants.

Tom: Yeah, right.

Jeff: "Oh here's the background guy," who comes in and draws the backgrounds. The car guy draws the cars, and the speed line guy draws the speed lines.

Tom: The speed line guy (chuckles)...

Jeff: This year you made two twenty-four hour mini-comics...*Maria* and *The Most Powerful Gate*. Did you do those after or during *New Hat*?

Tom: *Maria* was during *New Hat* and *The Most Powerful Gate* was after. Twenty-four hour comics are a great thing. I recommend them.

Jeff: Why did you decide to do them?

Tom: That's Scott McCloud's game. He invented them, but the reason I decided to do them was to get myself out of some ruts.

Jeff: Not only did you draw it in twenty-four hours, but they're long too...

Tom: They're twenty-four pages. That's the idea, twenty-four pages in twenty-four hours. I think you need to be constantly teaching yourself new ways of doing things, new tricks, new things about how you work, and boy, that was a great way. I was really excited to do it. A bunch of us got together in a room that first time, me, Ed, Megan, Dave Lasky, Al Columbia and maybe one or two others, and boy that was great. I was done and said, "let's do it next week!" It didn't happen that we did it till three months later, but still, it happened again.

Jeff: With those, did you kind of have an idea for the story in advance, or was it all just right off the top of your head?

Tom: With the first one, maybe one or two images were in my head. The image of a girl who had lost her dog, and the image of a guy and a girl floating down the river was in my head a lot. One reason that it was good for me to do was 'cause it was in my head so much that I couldn't get it out, so I just sort of threw it up, spat it out in twenty-four hours. It teaches you so much about how many blocks you often have in making a comic. If

OKAY!! FIRST RULE!! NO SMOKING!!
SECOND RULE!! NO STINKY BROTHERS!
THIRD RULE YOU BARK WHEN THE MONSTERS APPEAR!
MONSTER!!
YARP!!
GOOD DOGGIE.
LIFT OFF IN T- MINUS 60

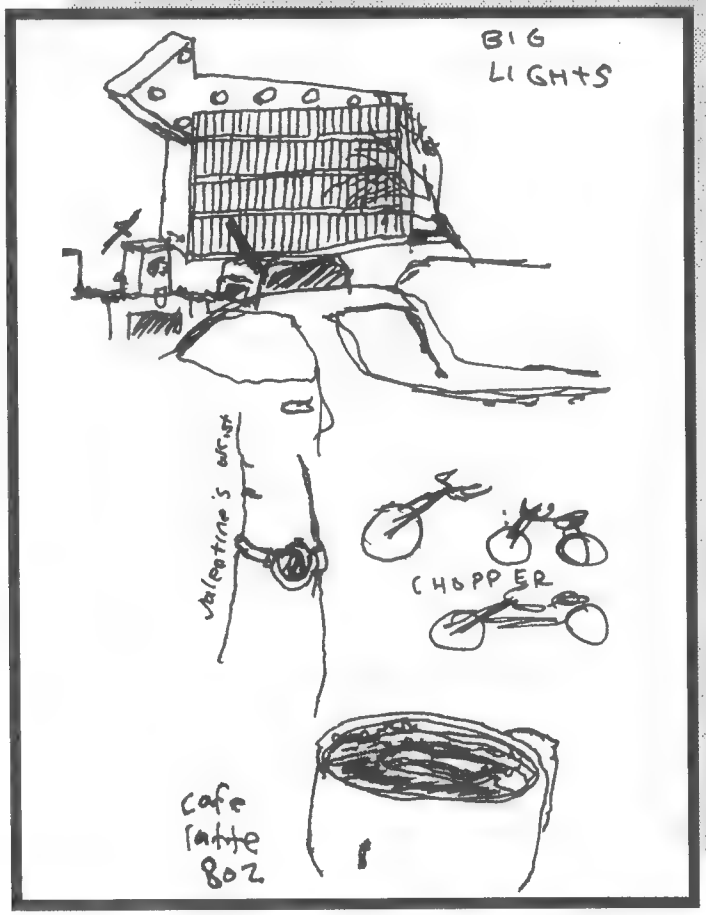
you force yourself to do that many pages that quickly you realize how many things you just have to say, "Alright, the hell with that," and it's good. It teaches you to do things you'd never done before. The second one, I just took an encyclopedia and took a couple of images out of it. I think that one is less successful. Jon Lewis definitely thinks it's less successful. He said it was "bullshit," (laughs) but only after a few days.

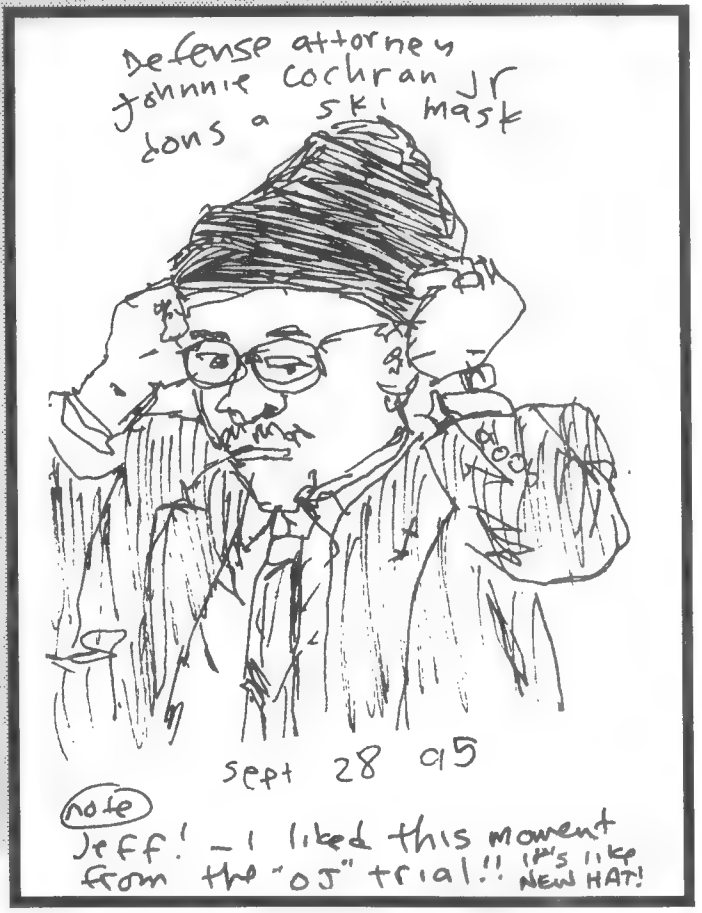
Jeff: Yeah, and I do think there's something more to *Maria*, but there's things I like about *The Most Powerful Gate* too.

Tom: I do too. Again it's a case of wanting to get less involved with my ego, and sometimes that's not always the best thing. I wanted to stay as detached as possible for the second one, and it taught me some new things, some fun things, but I'm not sure if that's the way to do it always. That one was more fun, but *Maria* was fun too.

Jeff: They're really different. Why did you decide to make them yourself, instead of trying to clean them up or something, and put them out as a book or whatever?

Tom: They're done with (laughs). I could probably draw them pretty quickly, but it just doesn't seem to have much of a point. The point was to make those things that you see there, so there's not much need to go "past" it, although I'm trying to take that




defense attorney johnnie cochran JR dons a ski mask
sept 28 95
note
Jeff! - I liked this moment from the "OJ" trial!! it's like NEW HAT!

some drawings from Tom Hart's sketchbook

model for the things I'm doing now. I might just say, "Okay, I'm going to make a twenty four page comic," and start by doing it really quickly like these and then reworking it.

Jeff: What projects are you working on now, other than the Japanese thing?

Tom: My next book from Black Eye is going to be called *The Sands*. It's sort of a blanket title for a while anyway, but I think the title will still sort of fit all the stories that will wind up being there. The first story is going to be about four issues long. I don't know what is going to happen after that. Maybe something more realistic. Maybe I'll adapt something.

Jeff: So you're going to do a series now for them?

Tom: It's not indefinite, and I think the stories will all be related in some way. It's not going to be like the Eightball format. I think they're all going to be related. They're all going to be sort of deserty stories, but there will be different stories done.

Jeff: How far into that are you?

Tom: I'm working on the first draft now. It's not going to come out until June.

Jeff: June of 1996?

Tom: Yeah, and I guess I'll be quarterly.

Jeff: And how thick will each one be?

Tom: Probably around twenty-four pages. It's going to be 6" X 9" too, which I'm really happy about.

Jeff: So it's still in the pretty formative stages?

Tom: Yeah, extremely formative. I could tell you what it's about right now, but it'll probably change. It's definitely about a guy and a girl, and another guy on a river, and maybe a king, but I'm not really sure at this point. But I'm trying to do this in that twenty-four hour comic inspired method, which is to do a first draft as quickly as possible, and I'm also trying to do it as long as possible. I'm shooting for a hundred pages, but I'd like to get down about two hundred pages and then chip away from there. And then do another draft. This all comes from just wanting to do it in a different way again. Originally I'd hoped it would be similar to *New Hat*, just a little more spacious. By similar, I mean a bunch of short maybe twelve page stories that sort of interlink, but only sort of. They feel right together, but it's not necessary to really trace them from story to story. I'm not sure if that's still going to happen or not. I'm not sure if it's going to be a bunch of very short pieces or if it's going to be one long piece. It's definitely going to jump around in time, like *New Hat* did.

Again it's the whole desire for a new...to make something I haven't seen before. I keep just making the things that I'd really like to read. In this case it's just a bunch of related things that actually tell a story. I mean, there's a story there, but it's not linear and it's not stressing plot, and it's not stressing "action." Its stresses need to be internal. Things emphasize each other, and make for a rich experience in reading it.

If maybe there were a book of ten *Frank* stories and by the time you finished it you realized you'd just read one long story and didn't even know you were. Like things actually changed. Like Manhog was different and you could trace Manhog's evolution during this whole story, and Frank had somehow changed and the chicken had moved away, and all this is only picked up after you finish the whole book and look at it and realize that's what had gone on, and the reason the chicken had gone away was because Manhog had done something to his wife (laughs) that you didn't realize was his wife until you'd finished the whole thing.

Jeff: What kind of comics are you into now? Do comics influence you? Are you interested in what other people are doing?

Tom: (sigh) I'm sadly not interested. I just realized I let out a big sigh there didn't I? I like *Frank* a lot, and I like Chester Brown, but I don't find very much inspiring. I like all my friends' work (laughs). I think Jon Lewis is really great, and I think his next book is going to be really awesome...his next book for Slave Labor.

Jeff: What's that called?

Tom: Ghost Ship.

Jeff: What is it that you wish was being done in comics that isn't, so they would interest you more?

Tom: I think I want people to pay more attention to the entirety of the project that they're working on. By that, I mean the form it'll take and the way it'll be read. It seems like for me a lot of comics are just about the author, and I'm not interested in knowing about that many people. I want to read comics that are new in a lot of ways. The form and the formats that comics take are really important to me. By form, I mean there might be a particular story, but how that story is packaged, and by that I mean how it's told, needs to be unique to me, or at least special somehow, and the way that telling is presented is really important to me too. I think I'm pretty romantic when it comes to mini-comics. Mini-comics usually have a check already in the plus category just because I like the format. I like little xerox things, and I like that people have made them. But that doesn't excuse a lot of the bad mini-comics out there (laughs).

Jeff: Why do you chose to do *Hutch Owens* and *New Hat* not in a mini-comic type format, but more in a slicker format?

Tom: Because I think that's how they should be presented. They're not mini-comics. The two twenty-four hour comics are mini-comics and I think they work well like that, but these are meant to emulate real comics in a way.

Jeff: What do you feel the difference between a "mini-comic" and a "real comic" is?

Tom: I think there's generally a lot more hands-on folding and stapling, and to me that tells me that the person thought it was

one robe please!
yum yum... bald monk! bald monk!
I AM A BALD MONK!
I will get a bowl...
name myself NIGEL...
and send you treasures through the mail...

important enough to do that to. There's certainly slick mini-comics that are well-produced that sort of bridge those two categories. It just seems to me that a lot of times mini-comics are more about sharing, and I like that. I don't know what regular comics are about. I think mini-comics are often less pretentious. It takes a lot of fucking nerve to want to print several thousand copies of your book. It's nice when you only want to print a hundred or something, and it tells me that your head isn't too inflated and you're just doing it to share this little sliver of a comic book with the world. Full-size comics are a little more like, "Look at me, buy me, here I am. Take me home."

Jeff: Do you think it makes mini-comics better because they're not done by somebody theoretically to make money, or do you think that's just a nice quality about them, but not necessarily a better quality?

Tom: I think it's a nice quality, but not necessarily a better quality. I think it makes for a different approach towards it. A lot of people would disagree..

Jeff: You tend to enjoy that approach more...

Tom: Not more, but...there's just something about culture that people without pretension make. If everyone in the community is making nine millimeter films it would be really interesting to see, and it would be a totally different experience than actually watching well-crafted movies. I think watching a bunch of short films by people who have just purchased cameras, and don't know anything about them, but just want to share their little vision of the world is more anthropological; it's more about just seeing what people are up to, whereas once you get to a more full-scale production of some sort of medium, you're trying to imply that the experience will be richer somehow, or rewarding in ways that are more objective, deeper, more complex.

Jeff: Do you feel that yourself?

Tom: Yeah, that's the way I feel. In the way that you might enjoy music from the hills of Borneo made by people while they're farming or whatever, you can enjoy mini-comics...

Jeff: Or good mini-comics...

Tom: Or good mini-comics. A bad mini-comic...

Jeff: It's hard to enjoy in any way.

Tom: Yeah, it's going to be very annoying. But when you produce it in some sort of slicker or fuller fashion, you're implying that it's a different experience than just like a fossil or a record and culture of community, and that it's actually implying that it's going to be worth your time and that it's going to affect you somehow. Mini-comics don't always make that presumption, so are worth looking at sometimes. But I have a feeling that with computers moving in, this whole thing is going to gray up a great deal, as it becomes easier to fully produce things.

Jeff: Already it seems to me that there's not so much of a difference between the more popular mini-comics, and some of the more popular alternative comics. What's the difference between one thousand copies and five thousand copies? It's not so much. It's still so small compared to any kind of mainstream culture, where even superhero comics have to sell forty thousand without being cancelled, which is still small compared to a TV show that would have to be watched by ten million people a week without being cancelled, or the magazine that you buy on the newsstand that has to sell two-hundred thousand or four-hundred thousand or it would be cancelled.

Tom: It's all relative and it grays up pretty quickly. You could definitely argue that King-Cat is as much of a real comic as anything else, because it sells so well.

Jeff: I know mini-comics that have sold two or three thousand, maybe more, and then I know comics that have been printed by "real" companies with print runs of five hundred. So which is what? It's kind of confusing.

Tom: And the format can definitely affect my reading of it, because I think the regular comic format makes presumptions.

Jeff: The format influences you that much, that it can make it unpalatable, just because of the way it is presented?

Tom: Yeah.

Jeff: But you're probably the exception in this case.

Tom: You think so?

Jeff: Sure.

Tom: I guess so.

Jeff: That's probably the minority opinion. I'm sure to the average person most mini-comics would just look like a piece of recyclable garbage. "Oh well, this looks almost like the comics I used to read as a kid. This kind of looks like a real comic, but it's in black and white. What's going on?"

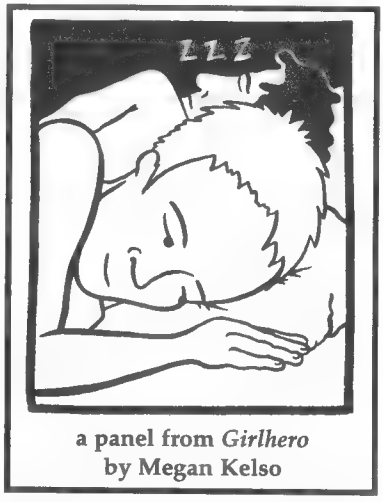
Tom: Oh, you're talking about real people who don't even read comics.

Jeff: *Real people* (laughs)?

Tom: (laughs). I don't know what to say to that. It seems that a lot of people in the comics community will judge mini-comics the same way they judge slicker comics, and I have a hard time with that.

Jeff: Do you feel that it's kind of a surprise to get something that somebody did themselves and not have it completely suck, and with something where it was published by a publisher you kind of expect more from it? You expect it not to suck.

Tom: It doesn't have much to do with publishers, but more with the package and the distribution. I would equate Girlhero with anything any company publishes even though Girlhero is self-published, but it's not a mini-comic.



a panel from *Girlhero* by Megan Kelso

Jeff: So you expect a little more of something if it is trying to present itself as more, but if it presents itself less pretentiously...

Tom: But I have a hard time telling you what more I expect out of it, what that quality is.

Jeff: It's the secret ingredient. Something you feel but can't put into words...

Tom: I'd like to, though. I want to say that it's more craft, but that's not it, alone. More conscious craft into it. More of a dialog. You know, a new Peter Greenway movie comes out and it's as much about movies as about whatever the content is, but again, a little eight millimeter showing by some nerd down the street....shit, I don't know. You can be a *pretentious* little nerd too, and that's even worse.

Jeff: Do you feel more proud of the things that you've done in the mini-comic format, or your longer works that were published by somebody else, or that you published yourself in the kind of slicker format?

Tom: That's a good question. I never thought of that. That's funny, it's such a simple one. I think I'm equally proud and embarrassed by everything. God, that's really neat. To me, *Maria* and *The Most Powerful Gate* are as much a part of what I've done as *Hutch Owen* and *New Hat*, but I would never make the pretense of putting *Maria* into a slicker format. There's no reason a thousand people need to see it. There's no reason for it to take up shelf space. If people want to see it, they'll find it, and they can ask for it. But I feel that *Hutch Owen* and *New Hat* might be

pleasant surprises and I feel confident that they would have a place on shelves in many comic stores across across the country. I don't feel that way about the mini-comics. I don't mind mini-comics being in a very small box that you have to dig for in most stores. That's fine.

Jeff: Of course, in most stores they don't even have them.

Tom: Yeah.

Jeff: The last topic I wanted to discuss was your recent move from Seattle to Austin. Is this a new phase? Why did you decide to move and how does it affect you?

Tom: Yeah, I do think it was a new phase in a lot of ways. The community of friends that I have there, cartoonists, Jason, Megan, Dave, Jon, Ed, James Sturm, was just the most encouraging, nurturing learning experience I've possibly ever had, definitely in my adult life. I'm not sure entirely why I needed to get out so bad. I think I needed to leave that environment to take my work more seriously. I wanted to get out of Seattle because the weather stinks too. I got depressed every winter and didn't want to wade through another one. I just need to be slightly mobile, slightly nomadic anyway. The main reason for Texas though, is Roxanne needed to attend graduate school here. We came here together.

Jeff: What do you think of Austin so far? How long have you been living down there now?

Tom: Six weeks. It's hot. I like it. It's flat, I can bike around. I can bike anywhere. It's smaller, although I just heard that it's one notch above Seattle in population all of a sudden. Like the newest poll came out, but that's hard to understand. I guess it's something about the size of the city or something. Bread and coffee are terrible down here. And the streets and the traffic are terrible. It's flat, but it's still hard to bike. But I like Austin, because the climate is more aggressive (laughs), and it's less of a little retarded climate like Seattle's got. I like the city fine. Texas is weird. Texans are weird, but there's not a lot of them in Austin. At least I'm not running into them.

Jeff: Who's in Austin?

Tom: Seems like a lot of people who grew up in Texas and hated it and just moved to the nearest place they could stand, so that was Austin. There's a lot of frat boys and sorority girls here, and they're incredible. They live up to their stereotypes so well. Yesterday I was driving and a can of beer (maybe it was a bottle) was hurled from a third story window and it landed right next to my car as I was driving down the middle of the street. Bam! They said, "sorry." They drive the wrong way down a one way street constantly, just so they can go party hopping. They're just going a block so they think it's okay. There's glass everywhere. They spend a week or two building these huge structures, in which to hold parties. Big wooden things with paper mache. They're painted and draped in foliage, and it's just so they can have a six-hour party and then they tear it down the next day. I think that's wonderful, and I'd love to attend one of those parties.

Jeff: Is there anything else?

Tom: To add to the list of cartoonists I like, put Chris Ware and Jennifer Daydreamer. I think her comics are one of the most pleasant surprises in the world.

Jeff: You did that comic together with her, right?

Tom: Yeah, we did the jam. It's not nearly as good as the things she can do without me.

Jeff: What is it about her work that appeals to you?

Tom: She's got a terribly good heart, and it shows in every drawing. She is trying to look far into her psyche for these stories. She does a lot of work to get to her stories. They're simple stories. They're like fables. They're magical. They're about fairyland. They're just wonderful. She goes places so she can show them to you. I love that, and I'd love more of that in comics.

Jeff: Since we're wrapping up here, what do you see in the future for comics in North America?

Tom: I think comics for me have been too much of an extremely accessible medium for communication. It's almost like a microphone that everyone feels the right to speak into, and sometimes that bothers me. I think people need to be more careful and realize (but this is true of any medium too) that they've got something special on their hands, and I think people take it for granted and just use it to blow off steam and get their face out there. I think that's fine for mini-comics. I think there will always be a part of a culture that is made up of people that aren't calling themselves craftspeople who are nonetheless creating, and there will always be wonderful things found in there, but I think too many people are running around calling themselves craftspeople or artists and not being very careful with that word and not being attentive to the medium, because I think comics, like poetry or like movies or like potted plants, or like anything, is a really special thing. It should be handled with care.

Jeff: Do you think that's going to start to happen more?

Tom: No. I will nonetheless make the demand, here and now anyway. I don't think there's any reason throughout the history of the world to believe that such a time will exist but I'll make the demand anyway.

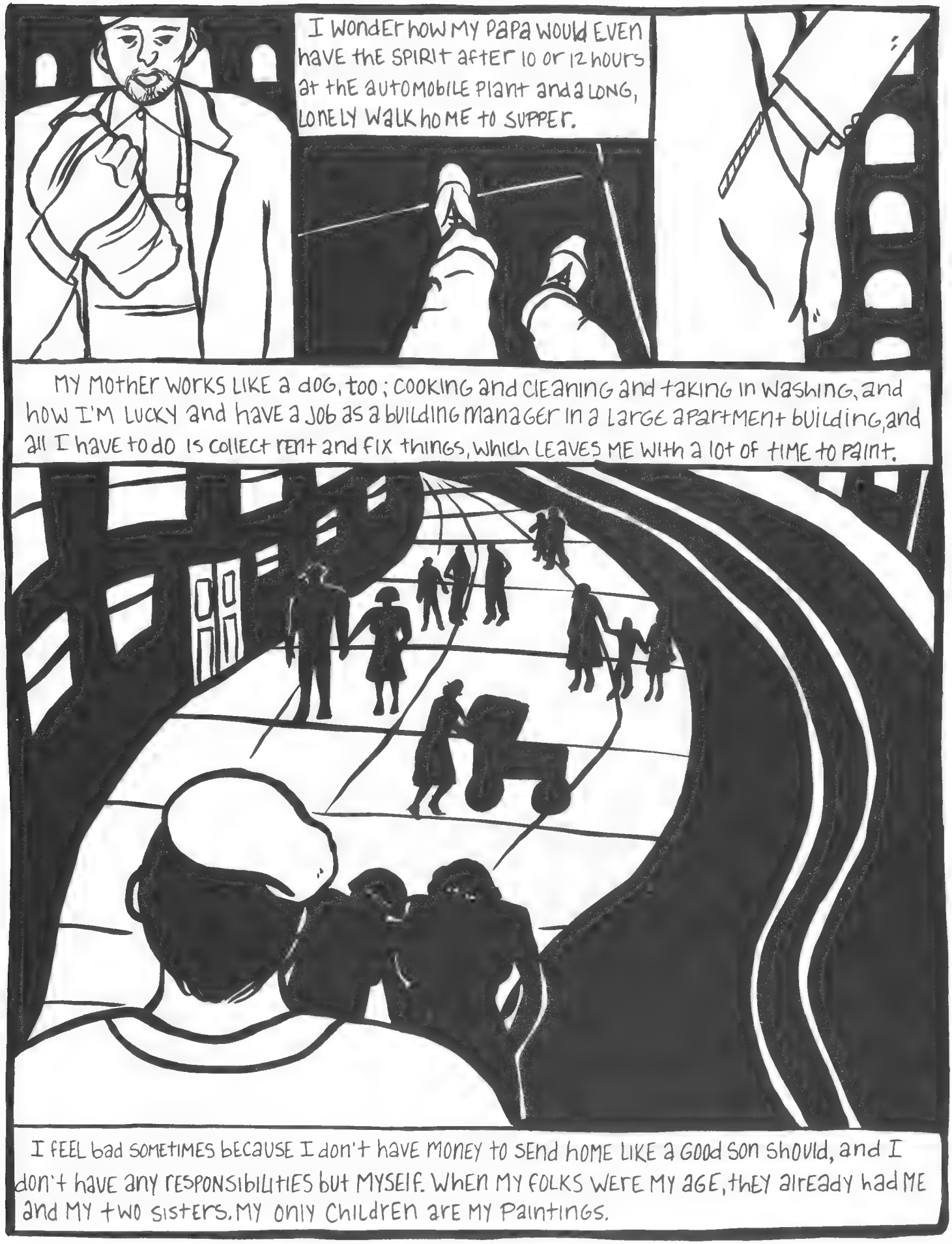
Jeff: (laughs)

Tom: *Please* be careful (laughs).

Tom Hart is now bussing tables happily at a restaurant where a large number of Texans frequently dine. He would like to remind you to support mini-comics by ordering the Spit and a Half catalog by sending a stamp to P.O. Box 18510, Denver, CO 80218. His mini-comics can be found there, with the exception of the new *Pitch Unger: Haunted Lake* mini-comic which is available through him for $4.00 postage-paid @ 4012-B Maplewood, Austin, TX 78722 (until June 1996).

DO YOU KNOW THOSE TESTS YOU TAKE IN SCHOOL? LIKE TO TELL YOU THAT YOU SHOULD BE A LIBRARIAN OR WHATEVER WHEN YOU GROW UP?
YEAH - I KNOW 'EM. FILL-IN-THE-DOTS, RIGHT?
YEAH - I TOOK IT LAST WEEK AND YOU KNOW WHAT IT SAID I SHOULD BE?
NOPE.
A "FACILITY COORDINATOR"
HA HA HA HA HA HA!
I MEAN - WHAT THE HECK IS A "FACILITY COORDINATOR?"
HA HA HA! I DON'T KNOW WILLIE, BUT I'M SURE YOU'D MAKE A FINE ONE.
DID YOU EVER TAKE THAT TEST?
YEAH - I TOOK IT.
WHAT'D YOU GET??
"SUPERHERO"
I ADDED IT IN.
HERE - I'VE GOT SOMETHING FOR YOU. IT'S MY FIRST BOOK.
EVERYTHING I EVER REALLY NEEDED TO KNOW I HAD TO TEACH MYSELF
BY HUTCH OWEN
I WANT YOU TO HAVE A COPY.
WOW THANKS. YOU SURE YOU WANT TO GIVE THIS TO ME?
MY WHOLE LIFE HAS BEEN GIVING THINGS AWAY, WILLIE. IT'S NO BIG DEAL...
HERE - HAVE SOME SUNFLOWER SEEDS

HARLEM
It's magical, sunny days like this that I can see my neighborhood for the first time again, even though I've been here 3 years already. My spirits are high because I just bought a new sable brush. I can paint all evening because I don't have to work today, either.
Days like this the walk home is a great pleasure because it gives me time to think and reflect on all of the beauty that I see.
I wonder if the folks back home in Detroit appreciate beauty the way I do.
I wonder if they even have the time to admire a cloud formation, or the curve of a fender, or the sunset light radiating off a building in a way that makes my heart pound and my eyes almost water.


I wonder how my papa would even have the spirit after 10 or 12 hours at the automobile plant and a long, lonely walk home to supper.
My mother works like a dog, too; cooking and cleaning and taking in washing, and how I'm lucky and have a job as a building manager in a large apartment building, and all I have to do is collect rent and fix things, which leaves me with a lot of time to paint.
I feel bad sometimes because I don't have money to send home like a good son should, and I don't have any responsibilities but myself. When my folks were my age, they already had me and my two sisters. My only children are my paintings.

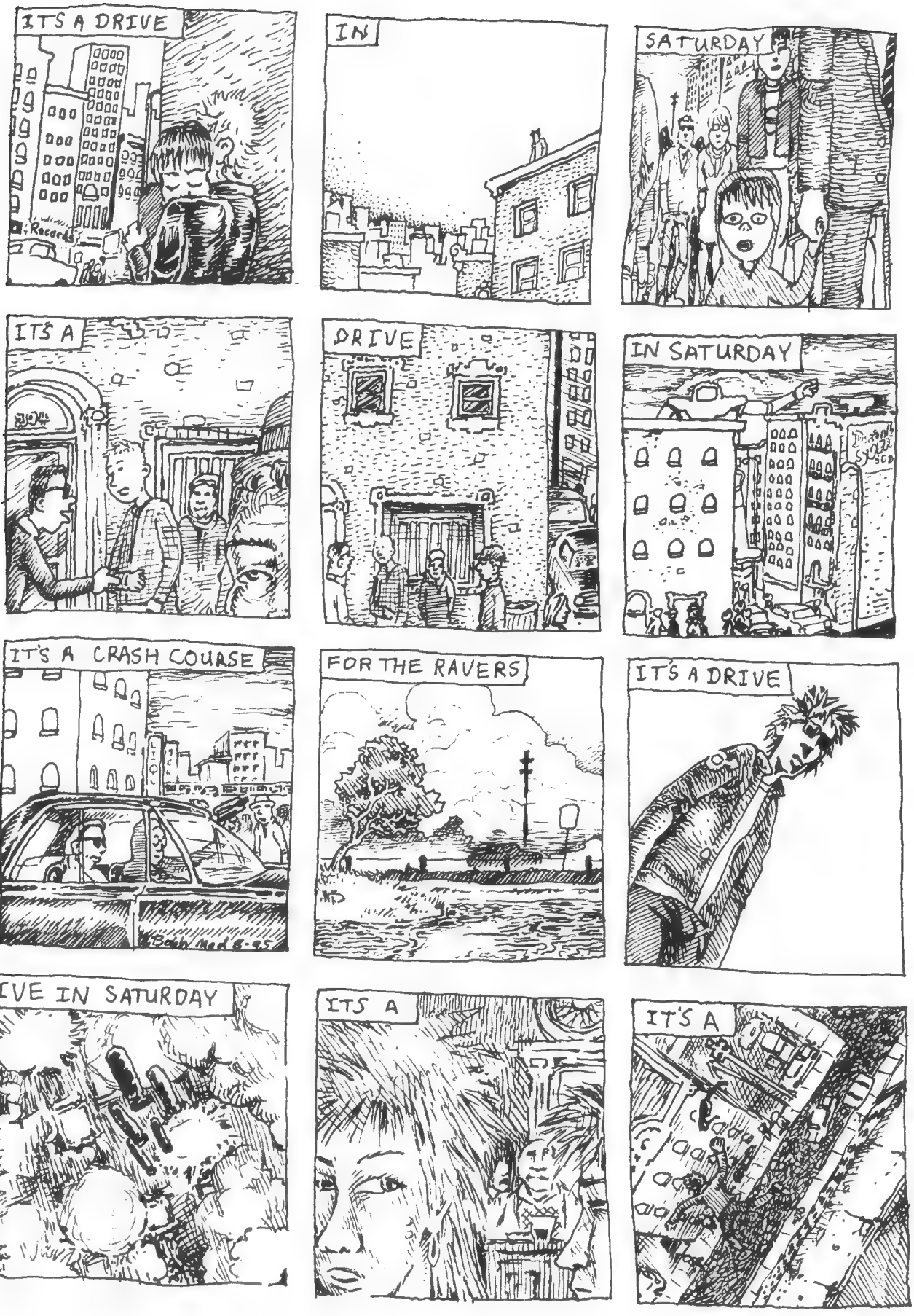
BUT I'M GLAD I'M HERE. HARLEM IS A KIND OF ARCADIA. THEY SAY YOU CAN'T THROW A BRICK HERE WITHOUT HITTING AN ARTIST OR WRITER OR A MUSICIAN OR SOMETHING, AND PEOPLE HOLD THEIR HEADS HIGH.
2789
1B
I FEEL AT HOME HERE, EVEN THOUGH I FEEL OCCASIONAL PANGS OF GUILT FOR MY FRIVOLITY. I EVEN HOPE TO STUDY IN PARIS ONE DAY WHEN MY PAINTINGS SELL (AND MY FRIENDS SAY IT'LL BE SOON), LIKE SOME ARTISTS IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD HAVE DONE.
FOR NOW I FEEL LUCKY TO LIVE IN HARLEM, AND I FIND MYSELF WONDERING HOW LONG THIS BEAUTIFUL DREAM WILL LAST.
(IN HOMAGE TO AARON DOUGLAS)
GABBY GAMBOA 11/95

IT'S A WISE WIFE WHO KNOWS HER HUSBAND

IM BUSTED BILL OR ID TAKE YOU TO A SHOW TO NIGHT
IM BUSTED TOO BUT IVE GOT AN IDEA
GIT
GLOOM
JOY
JOY
PUT PLENTY OF ICE IN EM AND GET ME A MESSENGER BOY
YOU GO TO MY WIFE, TELL HER I WAS ARRESTED FOR SPEEDING AND TO SEND ME $25
GEE BILLS A SMART GUY
JOY
CLINK!
JOY
HERE COMES THE MESSENGER NOW
YES AND HAS WHISKERS
I THINK WE HAD BETTER BE ON THE MOVE
JOY
NO 13
SHE SAYS IT SERVES YOU RIGHT!
CHUMP!
GLOOM
BEAT IT
T. E. POWERS

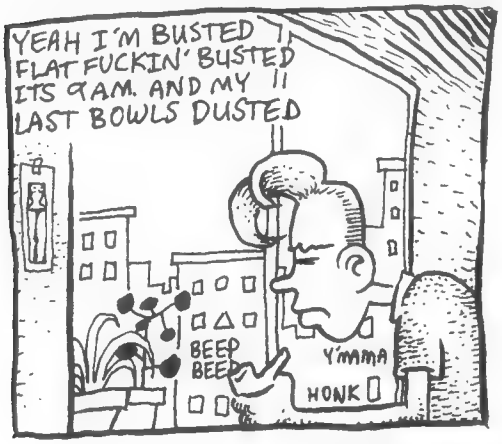
AND YET IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN MUCH WORSE

MR JONES IF YOU'LL SELL ME THAT OLD SWAMP NEAR MY HOUSE ILL FILL IT UP AND RID IT OF MOSQUITOES
ITS NO USE TO ME MR SMITH YOU MAY HAVE IT FOR $5
HERE'S YOUR $5 WHAT TAXES DID YOU PAY ON IT?
WHO! ME? I AINT NEVER PAID NO TAXES - I WAS BORN HERE
NORWALK
JOY
LISTEN - MR SMITH THE POPULAR N.Y. BUSINESS MAN HAS PURCHASED JONES SWAMP - NEAR HIS HOME - HE INTEND FILLING UP AND BUILDING A TENNIS COURT
BOARD OF ASSESSORS
HOUR
BOOM
NORWAL
ANOTHER BOOM
LETS GO DOWN AND LOOK IT OVER
MAKING SOME BIG IMPROVEMENTS MR SMITH
JUST GETTING RID OF THE MOSQUITOS
THE OLD SWAMP DONT LOOK LIKE IT USE TER MR SMITH
3 LOVE; SCAT
GLOOM
JOY
WE'RE THE ASSESSORS
OH GLOOM
NEVER AGAIN
To MR SMITH FOR IMPROVING JONES SWAMP AND FOR CRUELTY TO MOSQUITOS YOUR ASSESSMENT IS RAISED $3500 00
GLOOMS
T. E. POWERS



YEAH YEAH YEAH YEAH YEAH

RAPAZOIDIKAL STONEDEDNESS KILL KOMIKILL KOMIKX w/ Bobby Madness



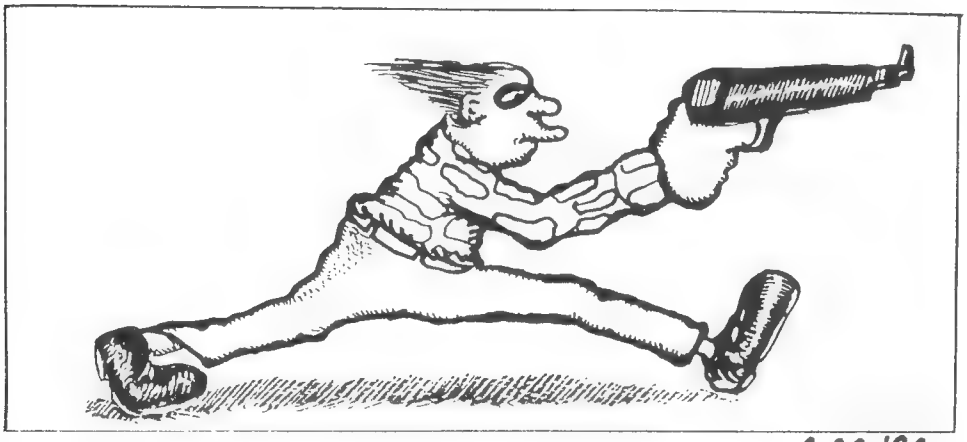
HERE'S A PLEA TO THE DEALER'S AND PIGS,
YA'LL MAKE BEING BUZZED HARD AND SHIT.
INSTEAD OF MACKIN' AND JACKIN' OUR CASH.
YOU OUGHT TO JUST CHILL AND SMOKE OUT MY ASS -
I LIKE LIKE
M.C. LYTE!

ALEKSANDAR ZOGRAF'S HYPNAGOGIC VISIONS

ALL THE IMAGES ENCLOSED WERE SEEN WHILE IN HYPNAGOGIC (HALF-DREAM) STATE •—

9.25.'92.

1.3.'94.

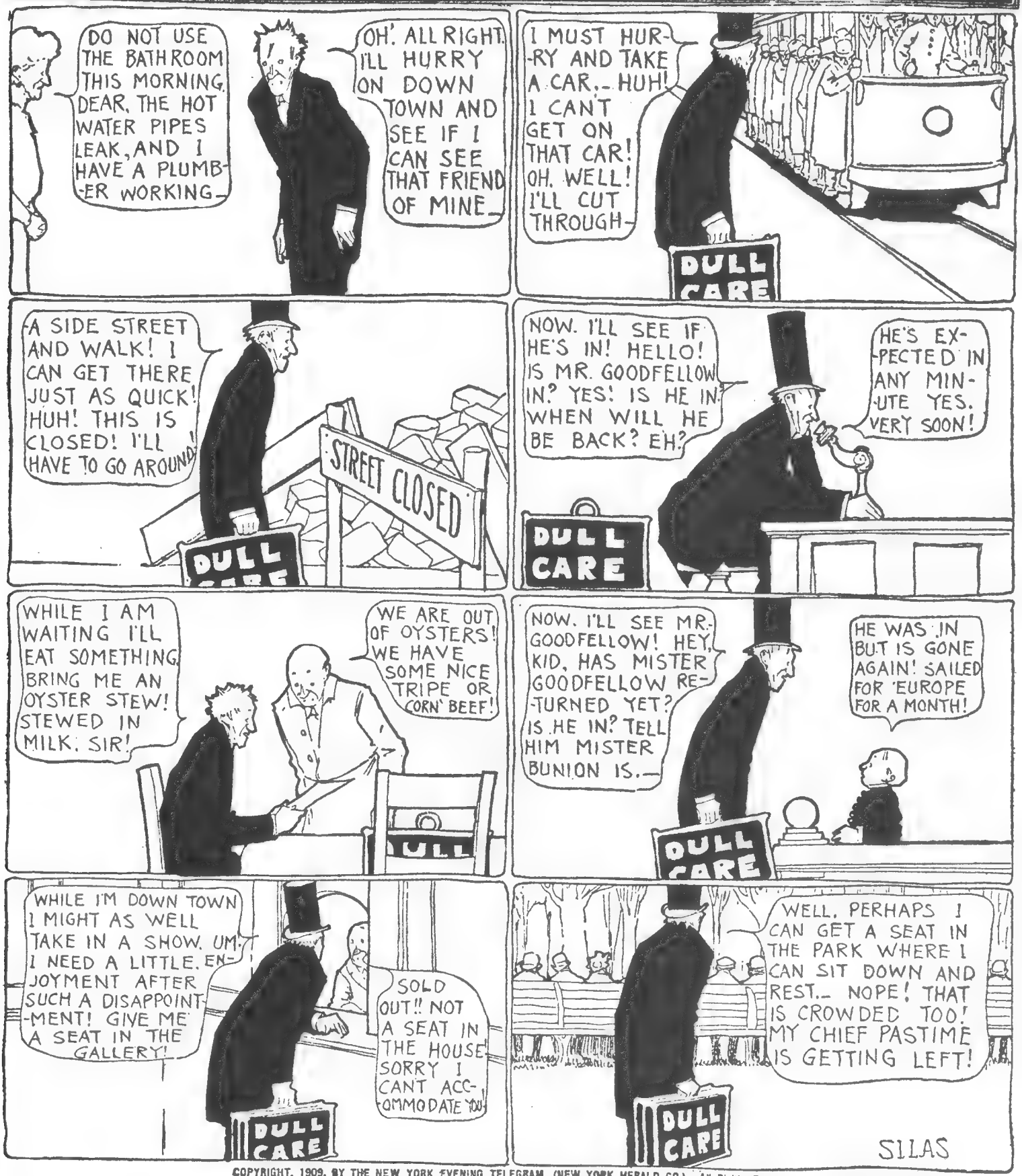


4.22.'94.

1.28.'94.

THE K CHRONICLES
BY KEITH KNIGHT
©1995 KEITH KNIGHT
YOU KNOW YOU'RE GETTING OLD WHEN...
Whoa.. Barkeep... Could I get a little more cranberry juice in This?
..YOU'RE NO LONGER HAPPY WHEN YOU GET A DRINK WITH TOO MUCH ALCOHOL IN IT..
1985-1987
..YOU REALIZE THAT NOT ONLY DO YOU HAVE BAD HAIR DAYS..
..YOU HAVE BAD HAIR YEARS..
WRITE!! P.O. BOX 5917 SFSU SF, CA 94159-1794
..& YOU GOT IT GROWIN' OUT YOUR EARS..
BORN IN 1976?!!
SMUT
TEN MINUTE BROWSING LIMIT
..PLAYBOY BUNNIES ARE WAY YOUNGER THAN YOUR LITTLE SISTER...
That was Duran Duran with a remake of Grandmaster Flash's "White Lines"..
YOU START HEARING SONGS YOU GREW UP WITH IN A COMPLETELY DIFFERENT WAY..
..YOU QUIT TRYING TO KEEP UP WITH THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY..
VTR
Adrian!! Love your work, babe.. JUST love it!!
CHOP!
14-- Already a comic legend
28-- Drunk poor.
..YOU START COMPARING AGES AND SUCCESS RATES OF YOUR PEERS TO YOUR OWN..
YOUR COMIC JUST ISN'T AS FUNNY AS IT USED TO BE..
oh, HA.
STOP

A PILGRIM'S PROGRESS
By MISTER BUNION.


DO NOT USE THE BATHROOM THIS MORNING, DEAR, THE HOT WATER PIPES LEAK, AND I HAVE A PLUMB-ER WORKING—
OH! ALL RIGHT. I'LL HURRY ON DOWN TOWN AND SEE IF I CAN SEE THAT FRIEND OF MINE—
I MUST HUR-RY AND TAKE A CAR,— HUH! I CAN'T GET ON THAT CAR! OH, WELL! I'LL CUT THROUGH—
DULL CARE
A SIDE STREET AND WALK! I CAN GET THERE JUST AS QUICK! HUH! THIS IS CLOSED! I'LL HAVE TO GO AROUND!
STREET CLOSED
DULL CARE
NOW, I'LL SEE IF HE'S IN! HELLO! IS MR. GOODFELLOW IN? YES! IS HE IN? WHEN WILL HE BE BACK? EH?
HE'S EX-PECTED IN ANY MIN-UTE YES. VERY SOON!
DULL CARE
WHILE I AM WAITING I'LL EAT SOMETHING. BRING ME AN OYSTER STEW! STEWED IN MILK, SIR!
WE ARE OUT OF OYSTERS! WE HAVE SOME NICE TRIPE OR CORN BEEF!
NOW, I'LL SEE MR. GOODFELLOW! HEY, KID, HAS MISTER GOODFELLOW RE-TURNED YET? IS HE IN? TELL HIM MISTER BUNION IS.—
HE WAS IN BUT IS GONE AGAIN! SAILED FOR EUROPE FOR A MONTH!
DULL CARE
WHILE I'M DOWN TOWN I MIGHT AS WELL TAKE IN A SHOW. UM— I NEED A LITTLE EN-JOYMENT AFTER SUCH A DISAPPOINT-MENT! GIVE ME A SEAT IN THE GALLERY!
SOLD OUT!! NOT A SEAT IN THE HOUSE SORRY I CAN'T ACC-OMMODATE YOU
DULL CARE
WELL, PERHAPS I CAN GET A SEAT IN THE PARK WHERE I CAN SIT DOWN AND REST.— NOPE! THAT IS CROWDED TOO! MY CHIEF PASTIME IS GETTING LEFT!
DULL CARE
SILAS

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A PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

By MISTER BUNION.

SO. THIS IS YOUR PHOTOGRAPH ALBUM IS IT? UM —
YES. UNCLE! THOSE ARE ALL FRIENDS OF MINE. OR RATHER. PHOTOS OF FRIENDS OF MINE! THERE IS ALL I HAVE TO RE--MEMBER THEM BY,— IS THAT ALBUM! THEY ARE SCAT--TERED. NOW.—
DULL CARE
MARRIED, I SUPPOSE, AND GONE AWAY.
YES! THERE IS MISS ROSE. SHE MARRIED MR. OAK. BUT, THEY SEPARATED A YEAR AFTERWARDS. SHE WENT TO CALIFORNIA AND HE. I THINK IS UP IN MAINE SOMEWHERE, OR THERE ABOUTS!
DULL CARE
THERE IS MISS LILY, ISN'T IT?
YES. UNCLE. SHE MAR--RIED TWO YEARS AGO AND LIVED QUITE HAP--PILY. SHE MARRIED A MR. GOODFELLOW. A SPLENDID YOUNG MAN. WELL, YOU KNOW SHE WAS VERY NICE—
DULL CARE
HAVE THEY ANY CHILDREN, HATTIE?
OH! NO! THEY SEPARATED. SHE WENT DOWN INTO MEXICO SOMEWHERE AND HE IS AWAY UP IN ALASKA,—IN THE KLONDIKE, I BELIEVE. I DONT KNOW HOW THEY ARE DOING, UNCLE!
DULL CARE
ISN'T THIS MR. CUTDIMEN HERE?
YES. ITS A SPLENDID PICTURE OF HIM, TOO! HE MARRIED A MISS FLOWER, BUT DID NOT LIVE HAPPY WITH HER. HE IS UP IN LABRADOR ON A WHALING VES--SEL, AND SHE IS IN AUSTRALIA, I THINK.—
DULL CARE
YOU ARE GOING TO BE MARRIED SOON, AREN'T YOU, HATTIE?
NO. OUR ENGAGEMENT IS OFF. MY INTENDED JOINED THE NAVY, WENT AWAY WITH THE FLEET, DESERTED IT IN INDIA OR EGYPT AND NEVER CAME BACK.
DULL CARE
WELL. I MUST GO. HATTIE. I MUST KEEP MOVING!
I HAVE A NICE FELLOW WHO THINKS A GREAT DEAL OF ME HERE. BUT HE IS POOR. WITH NO PROSPECTS. AND ALSO IS IN POOR HEALTH,—IS NOT VERY STRONG, YOU UNDERSTAND.
DULL CARE
I NEVER DID LIKE YOU!!!
THAT GOES BOTH WAYS! I WAS CRAZY WHEN I MARRIED YOU!
I WONDER IF HATTIE SEES AND HEARS SUCH THINGS!
SILAS
DULL CARE

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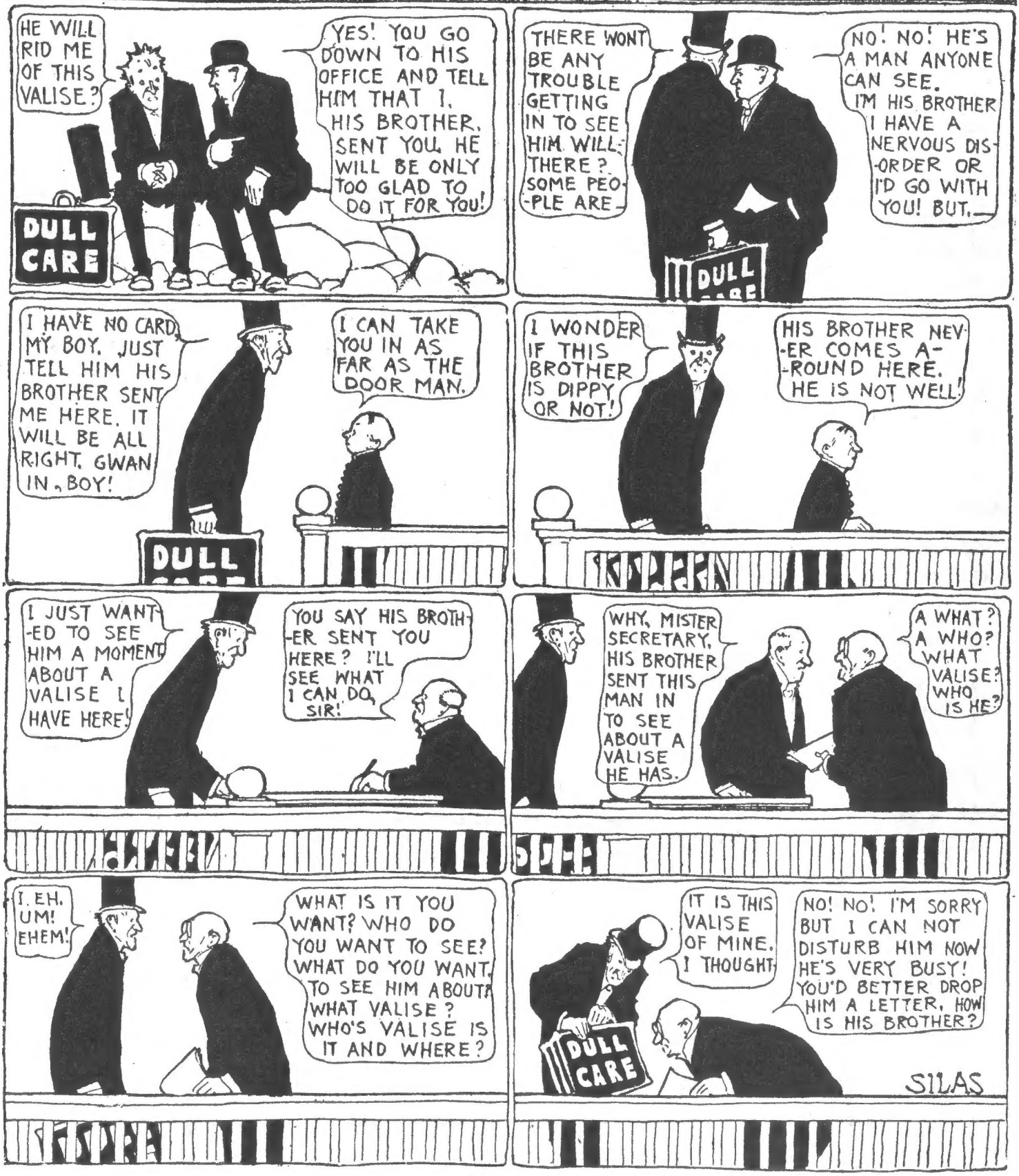
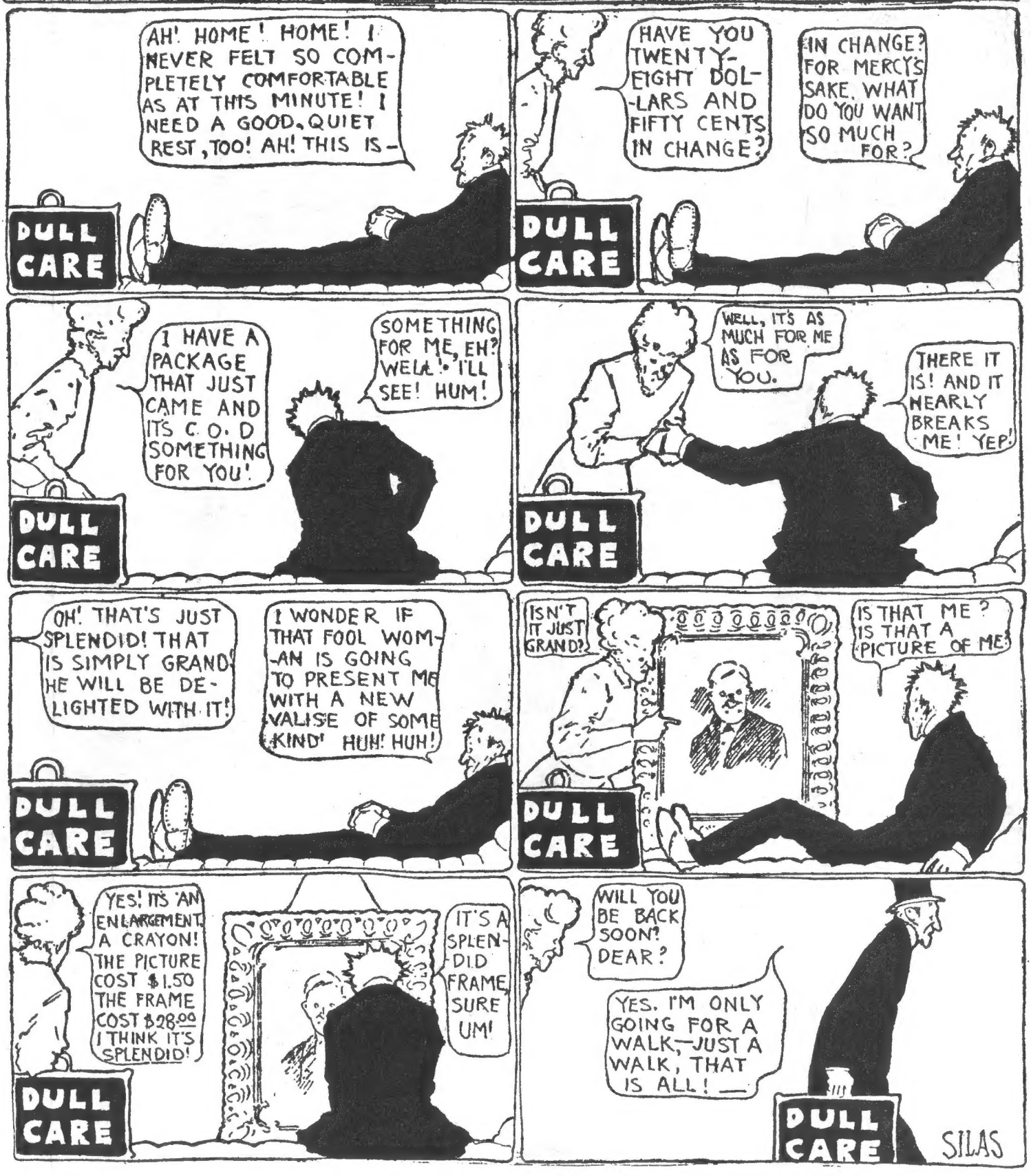
A PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

By MISTER BUNION.


HE WILL RID ME OF THIS VALISE?
YES! YOU GO DOWN TO HIS OFFICE AND TELL HIM THAT I, HIS BROTHER, SENT YOU. HE WILL BE ONLY TOO GLAD TO DO IT FOR YOU!
DULL CARE
THERE WONT BE ANY TROUBLE GETTING IN TO SEE HIM. WILL THERE? SOME PEOPLE ARE-
NO! NO! HE'S A MAN ANYONE CAN SEE. I'M HIS BROTHER I HAVE A NERVOUS DISORDER OR I'D GO WITH YOU! BUT.—
DULL
I HAVE NO CARD MY BOY. JUST TELL HIM HIS BROTHER SENT ME HERE. IT WILL BE ALL RIGHT. GWAN IN, BOY!
I CAN TAKE YOU IN AS FAR AS THE DOOR MAN.
DULL
I WONDER IF THIS BROTHER IS DIPPY OR NOT!
HIS BROTHER NEVER COMES AROUND HERE. HE IS NOT WELL!
I JUST WANTED TO SEE HIM A MOMENT ABOUT A VALISE I HAVE HERE!
YOU SAY HIS BROTHER SENT YOU HERE? I'LL SEE WHAT I CAN DO, SIR!
WHY, MISTER SECRETARY, HIS BROTHER SENT THIS MAN IN TO SEE ABOUT A VALISE HE HAS.
A WHAT? A WHO? WHAT VALISE? WHO IS HE?
I. EH. UM! EHEM!
WHAT IS IT YOU WANT? WHO DO YOU WANT TO SEE? WHAT DO YOU WANT TO SEE HIM ABOUT? WHAT VALISE? WHO'S VALISE IS IT AND WHERE?
IT IS THIS VALISE OF MINE. I THOUGHT-
NO! NO! I'M SORRY BUT I CAN NOT DISTURB HIM NOW HE'S VERY BUSY! YOU'D BETTER DROP HIM A LETTER. HOW IS HIS BROTHER?
DULL CARE
SILAS

A PILGRIM'S PROGRESS
By MISTER BUNION.


AH! HOME! HOME! I NEVER FELT SO COMPLETELY COMFORTABLE AS AT THIS MINUTE! I NEED A GOOD, QUIET REST, TOO! AH! THIS IS—
DULL CARE
HAVE YOU TWENTY-EIGHT DOLLARS AND FIFTY CENTS IN CHANGE?
IN CHANGE? FOR MERCY'S SAKE, WHAT DO YOU WANT SO MUCH FOR?
DULL CARE
I HAVE A PACKAGE THAT JUST CAME AND IT'S C.O.D SOMETHING FOR YOU!
SOMETHING FOR ME, EH? WELL! I'LL SEE! HUM!
DULL CARE
WELL, IT'S AS MUCH FOR ME AS FOR YOU.
THERE IT IS! AND IT NEARLY BREAKS ME! YEP!
DULL CARE
OH! THAT'S JUST SPLENDID! THAT IS SIMPLY GRAND! HE WILL BE DELIGHTED WITH IT!
I WONDER IF THAT FOOL WOMAN IS GOING TO PRESENT ME WITH A NEW VALISE OF SOME KIND! HUH! HUH!
DULL CARE
ISN'T IT JUST GRAND?
IS THAT ME? IS THAT A PICTURE OF ME?
DULL CARE
YES! IT'S AN ENLARGEMENT A CRAYON! THE PICTURE COST $1.50 THE FRAME COST $28.00 I THINK IT'S SPLENDID!
IT'S A SPLENDID FRAME, SURE UM!
DULL CARE
WILL YOU BE BACK SOON? DEAR?
YES. I'M ONLY GOING FOR A WALK,—JUST A WALK, THAT IS ALL!—
DULL CARE
SILAS

Letters to the Editor

We value your comments and criticisms...please write us at:
1574 Hayes St., San Francisco, CA 94117, USA

Jeff:

Hello! Recently read *Destroy All Comics* #3 (Vol.2) and felt like writing in. Your honesty in your work is inspirational. For that you have my honest thanks.

So, you're laying off drawing comics, huh? (Or just dropping No Hope?) That's too bad because, while i didn't like your pen & ink humor comics, i think you really hit on to something with your more recent brush & ink chiaroscuro-style stuff. "Public Transportation" and "San Francisco" were flipping beautiful. Anyway, i just hope you don't totally give up drawing now that you've shown a glimmer of real promise.

Re: DAC #3. First i'll spew my beefs. Granted, you're an "indy," "fuck the norm," "small press" kind of guy, but a little copy editing can go a long way in preventing little nit-picky things (spelling & grammer errors, etc.), which can make a big difference in your ability to communicate. Things like the missing chunk of the *MUSE* #1 review left me hanging. Also, from the review section, i'd have to strongly disagree with your assessment that Matt Madden's *Terrifying Steamboat Stories #4* was weak and disjointed. His drawing style is stunning and his willingness to play with the medium makes for an exciting & enjoyable read.

Praise for this issue however, far exceeds my complaints. The feature articles on John Porcellino and Bill Blackbeard are fantastic. Though i cherish the *Comics Journal*, it's a fine service you provide to the comics community by featuring articles & interviews with those comics artists who are creating "important" work but don't get the coverage elsewhere.

Having been reading King-Cat for about a year now, it was great to find out about his roots, influences, and the like. Having also talked to him a few times i gotta say he's about as likeable a guy as you'll ever meet.

The Blackbeard interview was swell as well. What a right-on thing this guy has done by saving these invaluable national treasures! I pretty much devour every trade magazine about the industry (though i can't make it through CGB) and while i've heard Bill Blackbeard's name, i can't say that i've ever known who he is or what he's known for. My thanks to you and Dylan for this quite informative interview.

"Chat with Malazo" is a very nice feature of this issue. It's good to see some reviews by someone other than yourself. Your liberal use of example art throughout is examplary. Crispy clean layout and the fact that you don't use the contemporary (and mostly illegible) *Ray Gun* style spreads make *Destroy All Comics* quite a delightful read. Thank you, again...

Brett Warnock, Portland, OR, USA

Hopefully this issue is a litle less typo heavy than my previous efforts. Due to finances (none) and scheduling problems I've been unable to have it proof-read and corrected as thoroughly as I would like. I'm working to make this issue (and future issues) less of a last minute rush, but I can't make any promises. By the way, none of the Muse review was missing, but two sections of it were mysteriously transposed.

Destroy All Comics,

I'm very, very far behind in my reading, but I finally just read DAC #2. Just wanted to let you know that for me personally, DAC is the best magazine about comics that's out there.

The Seth interview was great. I want to see more interviews like this one, although I can't put my finger on why. I think it was the casual, conversational tone it took on, or it may just be that Seth's cool. Or a combination. Anyway, I loved it.

Just to ease Dylan's mind, I'm 16 and I love old comics, although most of my favorites are still fairly recent. My vote is cast for seeing pre-Peanuts Charles Schulz in a book-- I didn't even know there was any prior to this interview. Even just the one strip of his that you printed was great-- I never would've been able to conceive of non-Peanuts Schulz. You turned me on to Saul Steinberg, too. My taste is very broad-- I like everything. I love comics, and I want them all. And I just can't believe that Krazy Kat is going out of print.

DAC really does inspire me to both write and learn how to draw. I made a pact with myself that next time I lose direction, I'm rereading this issue. Good for you, bud.

There's just so much stuff scattered throughout DAC that I completely agree with, but that I've never actually heard (or read) anybody say before. The chat about Jack Kirby on page 15 was a classic (as was the Kirby Vs. Picasso essay last issue). Personally Kirby doesn't do it for me. Getting better, though.

If you came out with just a 40-page-long Comics! Comics! Comics! essay, I'd buy it. I'd buy two.

Your Drawn & Quarterly review was another classic bit of that articulating-my-thoughts stuff that you do so well.

The comics were pretty good too, but nothing in particular stood out as especially brilliant.

Tell Chris Caballos I said "Word up." He made some good points in his letter. I definitely feel that Vertigo gets a bad rap. The standard criticisms used towards Vertigo (dark and moody angst, interior monologues, etc.) only apply to a few of their current titles, most of which have been getting cancelled. As for stupid Verigo fans-- well, you can't judge a book by who likes it. I'm not "gothic," and I love Vertigo (most of it anyway). Personally, INVISIBLES is my favorite series (although from what I know of you, I don't think you'd like it-- as I said, my taste is broad).

As for not selling enough copies, I'm going to try to get some of my friends to buy some. I'd rather lose the Comics Journal than DAC.

Hal Phillips, Long Beach, NY, USA

Hello Jeff,

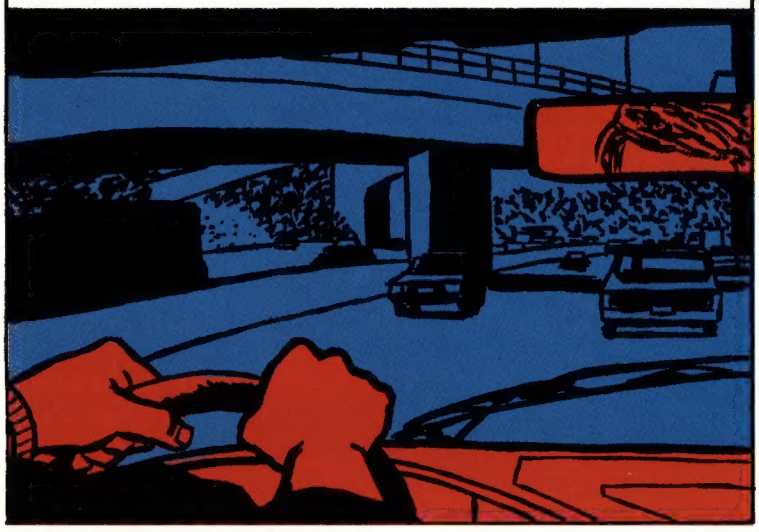
I picked up your significantly amped up new color cover issue. I really enjoyed the John P. interview. You did a very nice job of mining philosophy and information from John. I have been friends with John since we met in DeKalb 5 years ago, and think he is the Matisse of comics. You should have seen the paintings he used to do- very beautiful and powerful-slabs of color- raw and charged. John's work easily made the transition into comics, all to his benefit, and the audiences' as well. There are precious few people like him.

I have an older issue of DAC, and, while happy about your new look and distribution, hope that the thickness of content continues on the upswing. I enjoy the gamut of what you are focusing on. (From Blackbeard's research to John P.'s contemporary work is a wide berth!) I'm still not sure of what I think of some of the work-comicwise. I mean, I think the work in issue #3 is pretty decent, (esp. standout was G. Gamboa's work) and I'm not suggesting you turn into the Comics Journal. I'll just keep watching and enjoy the ride.

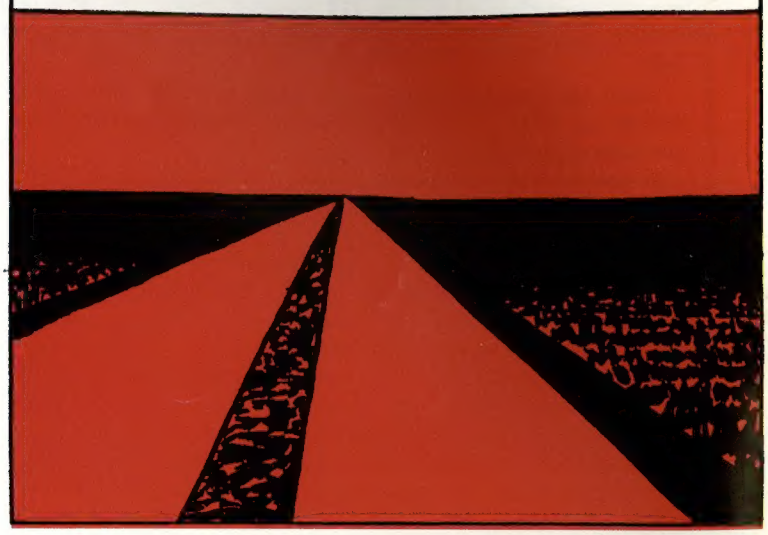
Dan Grzeca, Chicago, IL, USA

INTERSTATE 5

I'VE DRIVEN DOWN THIS ROAD ONE HUNDRED TIMES BEFORE.

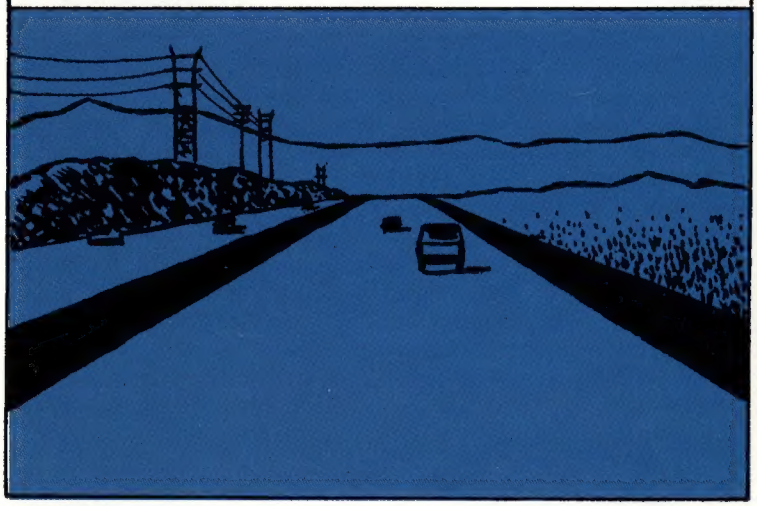


BELIEVE ME... I KNOW WHERE IT'S GOING.



BUT LATELY I HAVEN'T BEEN SURE IF THAT'S WHERE I WANT TO END UP ANYMORE.

I'VE BEEN THINKING ABOUT TAKING AN ALTERNATE FREEWAY AND HEADING IN A DIFFERENT DIRECTION.



MAYBE I'LL HEAD EAST AND SEE IF I CAN LOSE YOU IN MY REAR VIEW MIRROR.

J. LEVINE 11-95